

Behold the Bridegroom Cometh!

Many years ago, in the Wild West, in the days when the train was the main way of travel, a minister and his wife were traveling with their little boy. They tucked him into bed in the sleeping car, all dressed warmly in his little, red nightshirt and kissed him goodnight. They then went up to the observation car to watch the stars in the quiet November night.

Now on this same train was a man known as Gambler Jim, he was rough and untaught, making his living off the only skill he had, manipulating the cards. Down in the club car dealing a game, he was about to come face to face with destiny.

After the preacher and his wife had been up in the observation car for about an hour, suddenly a rough-looking fellow made his way into the car.

“Anybody here got a kid what’s dressed in a red nightgown and sings like a bird?” he demanded awkwardly.

The father and mother sprang to their feet, gasping in fear.

“The’ ain’t nothing the matter of him,” the man reassured then went on with deeper embarrassment, “The matters with- *us*. You’re a parson, ain’t you? The kid, he’s been singin’ to us- an’ talkin’. If you don’t mind, we’d take it mighty good of you to come with me. Not you, ma’am. The kid’s all safe, an’ the parson’ll bring him back in a little while.”

The parson followed through thirteen cars to the smoky club car, near the front of the train. There they stopped to listen. Up on a table stood the tiny boy, his face flushed, his voice shrill and sweet.

“Is you ready?” he cried insistently. “My papa says the Bridegroom is Jesus, an’ He wants everybody to be ready when he comes, just ‘cause he loves you.”

Then with childish sweetness came the song which had evidently made the deepest impression on the child’s mind, “**Are you ready for the Bridegroom when He comes?**”

“He’s sung it over and over,” whispered the gambler, “and I couldn’t stan’ no more. He said you’d pray, Parson?”

As the two approached, the boy lifted his sweet, serious eyes to his father’s

“They want to get ready.” he said simply. And, with his boy snuggled, childishly in his arms, the minister prayed, as he had never prayed before, for the men gathered around the child.

In a few minutes, the father returned the child to his anxious mother, and returned to talk with the men, four of whom that night decided to “get ready”, and among them was the rough man, Gambler Jim.

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To this day, it remains a mystery how the child succeeded in reaching the smoking-car unnoticed and unhindered. As for the little fellow himself, his work was early done, for a few weeks later, upon the return trip, he was stricken with a swift and terrible disease and fell asleep in Jesus.

But what of Gambler Jim? He gave up his old life that night and served the Lord from that day onward. He sought an education and became a preacher. Preacher Jim loves to tell the sweet story of the little child that led him to Jesus.