

A Very Special Christmas
By Vicki Hinze, author of *Deadly Ties*

The Christmas I turned ten was a tough one for my family. My brother was a vegetable, and he sometimes went into convulsions, which required trips to the hospital. Right before the holidays, he had two episodes and made two trips, which meant the family Christmas money had to go to pay medical bills.

My mom and dad were upset that there wouldn't be presents for me, and the kid in me was disappointed but certainly understood that Kenny's health most mattered.

For fun, my mother and I regularly read from the encyclopedias. We had the greatest discussions about all kinds of things. I realize now what a blessing that was, though then I just saw it as a fun thing we did. My mom loved books and had her whole life. Mysteries fascinated her.

Well, not long before Christmas, a classmate brought a Trixie Belden mystery to school and I got to read a bit of it. I was in love. I went home all excited about this fascinating book I'd read part of, and my mother checked with the library but, sadly, they had no Trixie Belden books. I was disappointed but I do believe Mom took the news harder.

How she managed, I don't know, but come Christmas morning there were three Trixie Belden books wrapped up and waiting for me. Each of them had a little piece of masking tape stuck on the cover with "5¢" written on it in blue ink.

I don't know where she got them—some pre-version of a used bookstore or a garage sale or something. Not a clue. They weren't pristine or new, but the way they made me feel... the royal jewels pale in comparison. Even now, all these years later, I remember how shocked and elated I was—one of the few times in my life I've been stunned speechless.

We read them together to my brother. It was a wonderful, wonderful day.

And now that my mom and my brother have passed on, it's a treasured memory of a very special Christmas.

May the Lord bless and keep you and yours and may you have a very special Christmas, too.