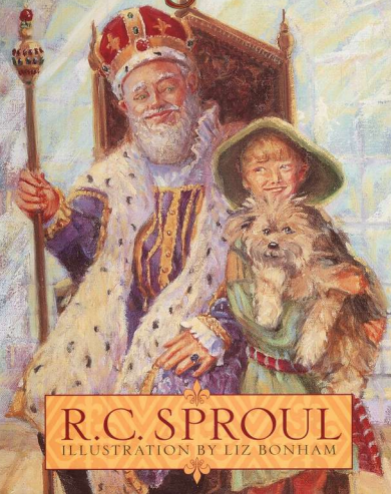


THE WITHOUT A KING SHADOW



R.C. SPROUL
ILLUSTRATION BY LIZ BONHAM



ONCE UPON A TIME in a land far, far away, there lived a king, mighty in power, and rich with money. Whatever he desired, he bought with his gold or commanded from his servants.

The king lived in a great house called a palace. The palace was so big that it had one hundred rooms. The rooms had beautiful furniture and expensive rugs. He had rooms for sleeping, rooms for eating, even a great hall where he held marvelous feasts for his guests.

The most wonderful room in the palace was called the throne room. There the ceiling was very high and the floor was covered with marble. In the very center of the room was the king's royal throne. Several steps led up to a chair that was carved from the best wood. Beside the throne stood a special staff



called a scepter. When the king lifted the scepter, people were allowed to come near and speak to him. When he lowered the scepter, people must stop talking and leave the presence of the king.

One day the king was sitting on his throne. He wore a gorgeous robe made of ermine, a very expensive kind of fur. He had on black shiny boots. On his head was a crown of pure gold with a large red stone called a ruby on the front of it. A large window was wide open, and the sun was shining into the room.

One of the palace guards came to the king and said that a little boy was visiting the palace and asked if he could meet the king. The king frowned and said, "A little boy? What does a boy want to see me about? I am busy and don't want to be disturbed. What does he want?"



The guard said to the king, "I'm not sure, your majesty. He only said that he has a very important question to ask you. He seems very concerned and would really like to speak with you. He said it would only take a few minutes."

"Humph!" the king said as his frown grew deeper. "I don't have time to be talking to children. I have a kingdom to take care of."

"Yes, your majesty," said the guard. "I will send him away. But the little fellow will be disappointed."

The king thought for a moment and his heart began to change. Finally he said, "Well, all right, then. I'll see him, but only for a few minutes."

The guard left the throne room and returned a few moments later. He was standing beside a little boy who was plainly dressed in simple clothes and had no shoes on his feet. His hair was mussed up, but his face was beaming with a big smile. The boy was holding a small puppy in his arms.



When the king saw the boy with his puppy, he lifted his scepter and signaled for the boy to come near the throne. The boy walked right to the front steps and looked up at the king. He tried to make a polite bow before the king but almost fell over because his puppy was wiggling in his arms.


"Yes, my child," said the king, "what is this very important question you have to ask me?"

The little boy was nervous. He had never been in the presence of a king before. He tried to speak, but the words were sticking in his throat.

The king smiled and said, "It's all right. Don't be afraid. Go ahead and ask your question."

The boy calmed down and said, "Your majesty, it's about shadows that I wanted to ask you."

"Shadows?" said the king. "What about shadows?"



"Well, sir," said the lad, "I don't understand why we have shadows. My shadow follows me everywhere I go. Sometimes it gets real tall. Other times it is real short. Whenever I turn, my shadow turns too."

"Sure," said the king as he laughed out loud. "Everybody has a shadow. My servants all have shadows. My queen has a shadow. The crown prince has a shadow. I am the king and even I have a shadow." The king turned his head toward the side of the throne and said, "Look! See, there is my shadow right now."

The little boy giggled. "Oh, my," he said. "I didn't know that kings have shadows too. Look, your majesty. Watch my puppy." The little boy put his puppy on the floor. The puppy saw his own shadow and began scampering after it. The puppy sprang at his shadow, but his shadow moved away. When the puppy moved, his shadow moved, and no matter how hard the puppy tried, he couldn't catch his own shadow.

As the boy and the king watched the puppy chase his shadow, the king laughed so hard that tears were rolling down his cheeks.

"This is great fun," said the king. "I haven't had this much fun since I was a young prince myself. But what is the question you want to ask me?"

The boy stooped over and picked up his puppy and hugged him to his chest. "Well, sir," he said, "sometimes it's fun to play with shadows, but sometimes shadows frighten me. When I am in my bed at night and a candle is burning on the table, I see all sorts of scary shadows on the wall. Shadows in the daytime don't frighten me, but shadows in the night make me very afraid."

"Yes," said the king, "I see what you mean. But you still haven't asked me your question."

"Actually, your majesty, I have two questions," the boy replied. "First, where do shadows come from? The second question is, where do they go when they leave?"

The boy explained that at bedtime his mother would come into his room and blow out the candle on the table. "When my mother blows out the candle in my room, then all the shadows go away."

"Humm," said the king. "Those are hard questions indeed. I really don't know. I've never actually thought about that."

"I'll tell you what," said the king. "The questions you ask are very mysterious. I will call in my wise men from the kingdom and see if they can answer these questions. If you come back next week and see me I will have the answers to your questions."

With these words the king reached over and lowered his scepter, signaling to the boy that the meeting was over and it was time to leave.





“WHY DO WE HAVE SHADOWS?
WHERE DO THEY COME FROM?”
THE LITTLE BOY ASKED THE
GREAT KING.

That started the king wondering about shadows. Could he, the king, escape his shadow? Even his wise men couldn't tell him how to escape his shadow. There was only one king without a shadow—one so great there was no darkness in Him. . . .

Come learn with the king and the little boy about the King without a shadow . . . and you'll learn about God's awesome holiness.



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Interest level: Families
Value: Holiness

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P U B L I S H I N G
P O B O X 87 • PHILLIPSBURG • NEW JERSEY 08854-0087

ISBN 0-87552-700-0



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