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### **Immanuel by the Hands of Charlie**

Denise Ouellette

**Too much! The pressure of going to college at night, working three part time jobs, and being a single parent was just too much. Overwhelmed, I sat down at the table and sobbed. *I can't cry now*, I said to myself as I looked into my 7 year old's face. *Must be strong for her*, I thought as I stood, drying my tears. "It's okay, honey, mommy just had a bad day," I tried to reassure her though the violent trembling of my hands and the strain on my face was not convincing her.**

*Liar, I thought.* It wasn't a bad day; it was the last three months. In that time I had lost my full time job, took up house cleaning, babysitting, and other odd jobs trying to make ends meet. My child support stopped. The final exam in my major was that night; my bills piled up; and I had no food in the house. I experienced so much stress I couldn't remember anything I studied. If I don't pass this exam, I can't finish my major. But worst of all it was Christmas and I would have nothing to give my daughter.

I dropped my daughter at a friend's house so I could drive to school and take the exam. I managed to control my emotions until she was out of the car and even smiled and waved in hopes she would not worry. But as I drove away, the tears could not be held back anymore. I sobbed, giant sobs, pools of tears, and screaming hysterically, I drove without seeing or knowing where I was going. The only words I could utter were, "Jesus help me!"

I drove past the college and wound up at Charlie's Christian bookstore. I had spent many days here reading, hearing stories of faith, and being mentored by this godly man name Charlie. I stood staring into the glass door, not even knocking when he noticed me. He was closed and probably would have told me to come back tomorrow but he could see on my face I needed to come in. Or maybe Jesus told him, "Let her in!"

He opened the door and I fell into his arms sobbing and pouring out my heart. He and his older daughter practically carried me to the back office, and listened as I rambled on. Then the two of them prayed with me and "...the peace of God that transcends all understanding" (Phil 4:7) returned to my heart, the trembling ceased, and tears stopped.

Before I left to take my test, he shoved \$300 into my hands. I tried to refuse but he insisted. Those funds carried me through until I got another job. I finished my test and passed and even

had a joyous Christmas. I will never forget Immanuel – God with me - in the ears and hands of my friend Charlie.