

Mrs. Middlejoy and the

Joyful Noise

A Church Mouse Story

Susan Call Hutchison

Mrs. Middlejoy and the Joyful Noise

by Susan Call Hutchison

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Chapter 1

Every church mouse knows that when humans get together to sing, people will soon be eating doughnuts in the recreation hall. So choir practice is an exciting time for church mice. A time of preparing for a Feast of Crumbs.

Mrs. Middlejoy loved choir practice for another reason. She liked the music.

While the other mice were scurrying through the walls to find a good place to wait, Mrs. Middlejoy would leave her cozy nest behind the church Lost and Found Closet, and sneak into the sanctuary, to hear the humans sing.

She would hold very still, and listen as the voices blended and echoed in the big church. Sometimes the voices would stop suddenly, and a large man would talk and wave his hands. But sometimes the music would go on and on, and Mrs. Middlejoy would imagine angels singing, just like in the stories Father Churchmouse told on Sunday.

I could never, Mrs. Middlejoy would think, make such a beautiful sound. Maybe humans have a special gift for praising God that mice can never have.

Sometimes, when the choir was singing loudly, Mrs. Middlejoy would hum along, imagining she was part of the wonderful sound. But she was afraid the music would stop suddenly, and the humans would hear her squeaky mouse voice and discover her there. So Mrs. Middlejoy didn't hum very often.

One day, Mrs. Turnwell, whose mouse house was behind a cupboard in the church kitchen, found Mrs. Middlejoy listening in the sanctuary.

"What are you doing, Melody Middlejoy?" Mrs. Turnwell asked. "All the mice are gathering near the recreation hall. You should be with the rest of us, getting ready for the feast."

"I just wanted to hear the music," whispered Mrs. Middlejoy.

"It's just the humans making noise," sniffed Mrs. Turner. "There's nothing in it for a mouse. You need to come help us get ready. Come along now, and help me find some extra containers in your closet for the crumbs."

Mrs. Middlejoy's home was in the wall behind the Lost and Found closet, where every week the humans donated more and more things the mice could use. The Ladies' Sewing Circle sometimes left thimbles that the mice used as drinking glasses. The Sunday School almost always left colorful paper, just right for shredding and brightening a nest. Mrs. Middlejoy's tabletop was a lovely framed Certificate of Confirmation. And her bedspread was a knit cap that had shown up the first snowy day of winter.

"Let's go see what we can find," agreed Mrs. Middlejoy.
She and Mrs. Turnwell left for the Lost and Found Closet.

Chapter 2

After their practice, the human choir left the sanctuary and gathered in the recreation hall, where big pink boxes were waiting on a table. Each person headed for a box, chose at least one doughnut and began to eat, laugh, and talk.

The large man who waved his arms around, laughed loudly and ate the most doughnuts. As he waved his arms, crumbs fell to the floor.

Mrs. Middlejoy's goddaughters, Alice, Beth, Doris, Ellen and Fran, watched patiently as the humans ate and talked. Mrs. Middlejoy's godson, Chester, watched too.

"I bet I could sneak out now and grab that piece of frosting before it gets stepped on," Chester whispered to Mrs. Middlejoy. "They wouldn't even see me."

"Maybe you could get away with it," said Mrs. Middlejoy. "But you know that every time a mouse is seen, the Sexton sets more traps and leaves more poisoned bait. That makes it hard for all mice to move safely through the church walls."

Chester frowned and looked at the speck of frosting on the floor. "I'm not afraid of traps," he said. "I'm not afraid of that old sexton. He hasn't poisoned me yet."

"Chester," said Mrs. Middlejoy, "I have lived longer than you, and I have seen things I hope you never see. Stand here beside me, and when the humans are gone, I will help you get extra crumbs."

Chester wanted to ask Mrs. Middlejoy what she had seen, but the humans started to pick up their books and bags and walk toward the side door of the recreation hall. The sexton was waiting there, with his keys, ready to lock up after everyone left.

"Mice to the ready," ordered Mr. Turnwell.

Every mouse got ready to sprint. They would have just a few minutes from the time the Sexton left to get his big, black broom, to when he came back to sweep up the recreation hall floor.

A human lady, with a big book under her arm was the last one to leave.

"Sexton," she said, as she stood at the doorway, "I'd like to come practice tomorrow, one more time before Sunday Service. Could you open the church for me at 2 o'clock?"

The sexton grumbled something and nodded, and the woman smiled as she stepped out the door. The sexton turned his key in the lock, and set the heavy bolt on the door. Then he headed for the stairs that led down to his room, and where he kept his broom.

"Mice, go!" shouted Mr. Turnwell.

Quick as a flash, each mouse headed for his assigned spot on the floor, and picked up the crumbs that had fallen in that place. Mrs. Middlejoy and Chester went together and even managed to get the drip of frosting off the floor.

Soon the mice heard and felt the stomp, stomp, stomp of the sexton's heavy boots coming up the stairs. Without needing an order, they ran back to the holes in the baseboard and disappeared behind the walls.

Inside, Mrs. Middlejoy and Mrs. Turnwell had set up the area for the feast. Every mouse helped heap crumbs into bottle caps and minty-smelling tin boxes.

Chester could hardly wait to reach out and take his share of the frosting. Just to be safe, Mrs. Middlejoy held his paw, while Father Churchmouse said grace.

"Thou openest thine hand, Oh Lord, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing."

"Amen," said Mrs. Middlejoy, with all the other mice.

"Let's eat," said Chester, pulling his paw away and reaching for the frosting.

"I wish the humans had choir practice every day," said little Fran, as she delicately swept crumbs onto the button she was using as a plate.

"I would like that," said Mrs. Middlejoy with a smile.

Chapter 3

The next day was Saturday. Mrs. Middlejoy was hiding around the corner from the big church doors at 2:00 when the sexton opened them for the lady with the big books.

I wonder if she is going to sing all by herself, thought Mrs. Middlejoy.

The lady walked into the sanctuary, and bowed her head for a moment. Then she headed up the stairs for the organ loft.

Mrs. Middlejoy was not good at climbing stairs. But she was very good at climbing inside walls. She rushed to the hole in the sanctuary wall near the space where Mama and Papa Tangleberry and all her godchildren lived. She scurried up inside the wall, and peeked her nose out of the mouse hole behind the big pipe organ.

She had never been so close to all the pipes.

The lady sat on the big bench and stretched her legs out over the wooden pedals below the console. The books she had brought were sitting on a shelf, just across from her face. The lady reached out to the white and black keys, and then something happened.

Mrs. Middlejoy started to shake.

She felt a rumbling in her stomach, and a sweet tingling in her ears. All around her, the pipes seemed to be dancing to life.

Now I know, thought Mrs. Middlejoy. *This is how the humans make the sound. It isn't just the bigger voices of the humans. It isn't just the large man waving his arms. It is the organ. And this lady makes it go.*

Mrs. Middlejoy watched and listened. She moved ever so slowly, drawn to the spot where she didn't feel the music shaking her tiny body, but where it felt like the music was inside her, singing for her. It was the most joyful feeling she had ever felt.

She watched the lady, moving her hands and feet. *She is pressing on those keys,* thought Mrs. Middlejoy. *That is how she makes it work.*

Mrs. Middlejoy decided that she had to try to make a sound like that. She wondered if a mouse would be strong enough to make the keys go down, and make music like the lady made.

She would find out tonight.

Chapter 4

At midnight, Mrs Middlejoy slipped out of her mouse house behind the Lost and Found Closet. She felt a little sneaky, as she avoided Mr. Turnwell, who was standing mouse watch tonight. Not because she was doing anything wrong. She just didn't think any other mice would understand.

She slipped past the Tangleberry nest, and up through the sanctuary walls.

The organ pipes were still as stone.

She headed for the big bench. The crossed supports underneath were a perfect ramp to climb. Once she was on top of the bench, it was an easy jump to the organ keys.

But when she jumped, there was no sound.

She hopped as hard as she could, but no music came from the pipes. She tried another bank of keys. Nothing.

Mrs. Middlejoy slumped her shoulders and tried to keep a tiny tear from falling from her eye.

The humans must know something, or have some power that I don't. Maybe it isn't given to mice to make a joyful noise.

Well then, she thought, pulling her mouse body up straight, I will be thankful for the song I can sing. Father Churchmouse always says, the Lord gives each different gifts.

So she hummed a little mouse tune as she jumped off the organ and slid back down the bench.

Whatever my light, I'll let it shine.

What ever my gift, I'll give.

I'll sing from my heart of a Love divine,

As long as this church mouse shall live.

If she had been listening, she might have heard the pipes ring--just a little--in response to her song, as she slipped back behind the wall and off to her home.

Chapter 5

All next week, Mrs. Middlejoy kept busy.

Sunday, she joined the Tangleberry family in the sanctuary, helping her godchildren scurry to pick up the little, round toasted oat cereal pieces dropped by human parents as they quieted fussy toddlers during church.

She listened to the human choir, and tried not to envy their wonderful sound.

She helped with the Sunday Feast of Crumbs after the humans left for home.

She taught Alice, Beth Chester, Doris, Ellen and Fran in church mouse school, and helped them learn the songs that mice can sing.

Monday through Friday, she tried to be patient, waiting for the human choir practice. She told herself she was only interested because there would be doughnuts.

But she knew in her heart she wanted to hear the organ again.

Friday night, the human choir made quick work of their practice, and refreshments. As the sexton turned them out of the church, Mrs. Middlejoy was excited to see the organ lady talking to the Sexton again.

Saturday afternoon, Mrs. Middlejoy was waiting when the Sexton opened the doors and the lady walked in with her armload of books.

"I won't be very long again today," the lady told the sexton. "I just want a little practice before tomorrow's service."

Mrs. Middlejoy hurried inside the walls and up to the organ loft. Her heart was beating so hard she could feel it in her ears.

If I get to the organ before the lady does, maybe I can hide quietly behind the shelf where she puts her books, thought Mrs. Middlejoy. If I watch closely, I could learn what she knows. I could learn how to make the organ work.

Mrs. Middlejoy darted up the wall and out past the silent pipes. She ran up the bench and jumped onto the keys, just as the lady arrived in the organ loft. She slipped into the tiny space behind the music shelf and held her breath.

The lady sat down, and covered the shelf with papers and books. She pushed a button, and the organ seemed to come to life. Mrs. Middlejoy felt a thrill, but she kept quiet, peeking around her shelf.

The lady's fingers pressed the keys, and a glorious sound filled the organ loft. She moved her fingers, slowly at first, and then faster and faster until the music suddenly stopped.

"What in the world?" said the lady, looking straight at Mrs. Middlejoy.

As every church mouse knows, the first rule of *City Mouse* style of martial arts is to hold perfectly still. Mrs. Middlejoy had no trouble staying frozen to her spot.

"Did you come to help me practice?" asked the lady with a smile.

Mrs. Middlejoy blinked.

"Did you want to play the organ, too?" The lady's voice was gentle, inviting.

Mrs. Middlejoy stared. *Could this be one of those humans I've heard about who actually LIKE mice?*

"You can sit all the way over there," said the lady, pointing to a spot on the keyboard at the far right, up against the wood of the console. "We can play a duet."

Mrs. Middlejoy crept along the wood and stepped out onto the white key. Suddenly, a single note, high and clear, rang out in the organ loft. Just the kind of note a mouse might make, if she were learning to play the organ.

"Excellent!" Said the lady. "Just stay there and keep holding that note. I know just the song to play."

And as she played, she sang these words:

*Make a joyful noise
Unto the Lord
And sing Praise!*

Mrs. Middlejoy heard her high note floating above the lower notes. She was so happy, she thought her joy might burst out through her whiskers.

The lady smiled and spoke. "For He is coming to judge the earth, little mouse. And I hope He finds in me a heart as humble as the little church mouse who helped me praise Him today."

Mrs. Middlejoy hopped off her key and back on to the wood. The sound ended, as suddenly as it had started. Mrs. Middlejoy curtseyed and ran back behind the music shelf.

"I wish you could tell me your name, little one," said the nice lady. "I am Carol. I play the organ here every Sunday. But you live here every day of the week, don't you? Wait till I tell my students I played a duet with a real, live church mouse!"

Mrs. Middlejoy smiled. Even a church mouse has her pride.

Chapter 6

The next day, all the mice gathered as usual for the Sunday Feast of Crumbs.

"I'm not afraid of being seen by an old slow human," said Chester. "I still say I could run out onto the floor and be back to the wall before a human even knew what was happening," he boasted. "I do it in the sanctuary all the time."

"But the humans are sitting down," said Fran.

"And we are hidden under the pews," said Ellen.

"And the carpeted floor is quiet," said Beth

"And besides," said Alice, "showing off and getting seen by a human is against the rules. Isn't that right, Mrs. Middlejoy?"

"Mrs. Middlejoy?" asked Chester.

Mrs. Middlejoy smiled. "Yes. Yes, that is the rule. Because, I imagine, it would be a rare and wonderful thing to find a human with a heart ready to befriend a mouse."

THE END

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*Someday, the Earth will be renewed
And every fallen thing
Will rise again and see the truth
Of all that they have been.*

*And those who served, and sought to love
Will enter God's own land
Where those who put themselves above
Their brothers may not stand.*

*And All God's creatures, great and small,
Will share the land in peace
Singing praises to their King
With Joy that shall not cease.*

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Thank you for downloading Mrs. Middlejoy and the Joyful Noise!

You can find more stories about Mrs. Middlejoy, her godchildren and all her church mouse friends in the Kindle Store.

About the Author



Susan Call Hutchison's life-long joy has been to share her love of music, language and reading with students of all ages. She began writing the adventures and songs of the church Mouse, Mrs. Middlejoy, at the age of 59. She is also the author of the Read-Aloud, Read-Along series of books for learning readers and their families. She and her husband Marc are the parents of two daughters.

MrsMiddlejoy.com

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Mrs. Middlejoy and the Minister's Cat

(A Church Mouse Christmas Story)

by Susan Call Hutchison

What kind of Christmas Carols do church mice sing? You might be surprised.

Mrs. Middlejoy is getting ready for Christmas in her cozy mouse house behind the walls of the church Lost and Found Closet.

But fear strikes her church mouse community when a big, gray Cat moves in to the Minister's study. Mrs. Middlejoy is godmother to six mice about to see their first Christmas. And she is determined that fear is NOT part of the Christmas spirit.

Rejoice with Father Churchmouse, tremble with Mrs. Turnwell, and cheer with little Chester as the brave Mrs. Middlejoy takes on the Minister's Cat.

A little faith and a lot of love make this short chapter book a family favorite for the Christmas season.

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Mrs. Middlejoy and the Haunted Churchyard

(A Church Mouse Halloween Story)

by Susan Call Hutchison

What secret haunts the old churchyard north of Mrs. Middlejoy's home?

The brave church mouse sets off on her second holiday adventure, and uncovers the fantastic truth.

A mysterious disappearance strikes too close to home, and Mrs. Middlejoy is not about to stand for it. October dangers lurk in the dead of night. She'll need help in the spooky Outdoors. Can she trust the street rat, Scooter?

Meanwhile, Chester learns mouse martial arts. The Tangleberry and Turnwell families face their fears and Father Churchmouse keeps the faith. While the remarkable Mrs. Middlejoy takes on the Haunted Churchyard.

The spunky, spooky story makes this short chapter book a family favorite for Halloween.

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Familiar Read-Aloud, Read-Along Tales

Classic Bedtime Stories

as told by Susan Call Hutchison

Remember the bedtime stories you learned as a little child? The simple ones you could listen to over and over again.

The deep voice of the Big Bad Wolf as he huffed and puffed. The whining voice of Baby Bear when he finds his chair is broken all to pieces. The built-in sound effects of billy goats clip-clopping over the bridge.

The things that make these stories so easy to remember and tell down through the years are the same things that make it easy for learning readers to begin to read along, once they've heard them a time or two.

Reading is more than recognizing letters and sounding out words. Every learning reader also develops the skills of following a story. We recognize familiar patterns, and learn to expect what comes next. And nothing beats these classic stories at capturing children's imagination, holding their attention and starting them on the road to following along as a story is read aloud.

That is what the Read-Aloud, Read-Along series is all about: stories crafted for the learning reader that families can read together for years to come as reading skills grow and change.

The treasured family tradition of reading aloud can spark a life-long love of learning.

So snuggle up and choose a Familiar Read-Aloud, Read-Along Tale for a classic bedtime story tonight!

Included are:

Chicken Little

(329 Words)

The Little Red Hen

(446 Words)

The Three Little Pigs and the Big, Bad Wolf

(615 Words)

Goldilocks and the Three Bears

(446 Words)

The Three Billy Goats Gruff

(713 Words)

Little Red Riding Hood

(908 Words)

Jack and the Bean Stalk

(1,626 Words)

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Bedtime Read-Aloud, Read-Along Rhymes:

Quiet Poems for the End of the Day

By Susan Call Hutchison

Snuggle up for an evening of bedtime reading. It's old-fashioned family fun that inspires a lifetime of learning.

These slice-of-life verses use rhythm, rhyme and a child's point of view to engage even the littlest readers as the busy day winds down.

The Read-Aloud, Read-Along series is designed for families with learning readers of all ages. Everyone can be part of read-aloud time by learning to read along.

Included are:

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My Bedtime Bath

When I Listen

Song of the Sky

Grandma's Picture Book

Summer Night

Then and Now

Pretending Sleep

Grandma's Music Box

I Will Not Go to Bed!

and a bonus bedtime story preview,

The Little Red Hen

from **Favorite Read-Aloud, Read-Along Tales:** Classic Bedtime Stories *as told by Susan Call Hutchison*

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Fun Time Read-Aloud, Read-Along Rhymes:

Poems of Work and Play

By Susan Call Hutchison

A short collection of poems just right for young readers who love to be part of Read-Aloud time by learning to read along.

The rhythms, rhymes and themes of these slice-of-life verses make them perfect for sharing with the whole family any time of day.

Give the gift of a lifetime love of reading, through the treasured family tradition of reading aloud!

Included are:

Early Morning Song

What to Wear

Grandma at Work

Tying Shoes

Did You Ever See a Whale?

Flying Kites

True Colors

Learning How to Whistle

Grandpa's Gift

Folding Clothes

and a bonus preview

When Will It Be Winter?

from **Year-Round Read-Aloud, Read-Along Rhymes:**

Celebrating Holidays and Seasons. (Coming soon to the Kindle Store.)

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Year-Round Read-Aloud, Read-Along Rhymes:

Celebrating Holidays and Seasons

By Susan Call Hutchison

It's time to celebrate with Read-Aloud time!

More than 30 original poems your family will enjoy for Christmas, Halloween, Valentine's Day; and many other holidays throughout the year.

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My Lucky Leprechaun

No Matter What the Groundhog Saw

Easter

April Fool

Mother's Day

First Day of Swimming

Summer Bird Calls

Summer Night

(from Bedtime Read-Aloud, Read-Along Rhymes: Quiet Poems for the End of the Day)

On the Fourth of July

The Lightning Show

Last Day of Summer Walk

Autumn Changes

Halloween is Coming Soon

Trick or Treat

Honor

Thanksgiving Thoughts

When Will It Be Winter?

Mrs. Santa's Night Before Christmas

Carol of the Mice

(From Mrs. Middlejoy and the Minister's Cat)

Christmas Morning in Our House

The Old Year Cake on New Year's Eve

Staying Up on New Year's Eve

One More Year-Round Rhyme

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