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Hunger For Love

By Mrs. Paul E. King

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I whistled loudly as I took the back porch steps two at a time and flung myself through the kitchen door. "Hi, Mom!" I called, tossing my armload of books carelessly on to the counter top.

"She's not here, Jerry," my sister said, speaking ever so softly and almost sadly, I thought.

"Not here!" I thundered loudly. "Where is she?"

Suzanne finished putting whatever it was she had in the pot on the stove then turned and stared at me for a long while before she spoke. When she did speak it was in that same kind of sad tone of voice. "Look, Jerry, you don't have to shout at me! Mother's with father. They've gone to the hospital. Mrs. Conifer's little baby is near death."



"Look, Jerry, you don't have to shout at Me!" she said.

I calmed down a bit after that and sprawled out on the davenport where I could keep an eye on Suzanne. She'd been acting strange lately, I thought. For over a month I had noticed it. What was bothering her, I wondered. Was it some fellow she liked, maybe? Secretly, of course, for Suzanne was too timid, modest and shy to show her feelings. Or had something gone awry in school?

Making hasty mental retrospection I ruled out the latter question, knowing full well that nothing... absolutely nothing... was wrong in school. Suzanne was a top honor student, well-liked and much-loved and respected by students and faculty alike.

I cringed uneasily when I thought of my sister's diligence in her school work. She took it seriously; books, I mean; and went at studying with zest. She seemed to enjoy it. Actually enjoy studying! Imagine! It seemed incredulous and a bit ridiculous to me although I knew I should be making better use of my time in school and should be using my study periods to better advantage than day-dreaming.

Trying to appease and soothe my guilty conscience, I rationalized (philosophically, I thought) that girls generally were more prone to take such things as books more seriously than boys. Little wonder then that, like Suzanne, they frequently excelled in their grades.

I was in my senior year at Walton High. Suzanne was a junior. Every year thus far, she had held top honors with her deportment, personality and grades. Not infrequently, the fellows ribbed me about my sister excelling in her grades. I took it in my happy-go-lucky, careless manner, saying I was thankful that I hadn't gotten addicted to books.

I was sure it bothered my parents greatly and gave them no little concern over me. However, I was quite adept at silencing thoughts such as these and I did it again by turning the radio dial to one of my favorite radio stations in the city. I turned it low, hoping Suzanne wouldn't notice the type of music to which I was listening, and hoping even more so that I wouldn't doze and have father and mother come home and discover that I enjoyed listening to music which they labeled, "devilish, sensual and wild." Nothing of its kind was ever permitted in our home when my folks were around.

I heard Suzanne working busily in the kitchen. Every now and again I glanced her way; but soon I was too absorbed in the wild jungle beat of the music to notice her. The music had a way of doing something wild and frighteningly exciting to my body and mind and before I realized it I was lost in the song and the beat and Suzanne was forgotten.

I must have slept, for I was suddenly awakened by Suzanne's voice, calling me to supper.

I turned the radio off and hurried to the kitchen.

"You mean Mom and Dad aren't home yet?" It was almost a growl.

Suzanne, in her quiet, unpretentious way, merely gave me another of those hard-to-figure-out stares. It haunted me. Don't ask me why, because I can't answer that; but it haunted me nonetheless.

"I don't see what they can do when someone's dying!" I grumbled crossly.

Suzanne looked away. There were tears in her eyes. Her big blue eyes that looked as blue as any sky I ever did see. I was more confused than ever. "Look, Suzanne," I began, my tone of voice far softer and more pleasant than I had dreamed I could make it, "who is this bully that's breaking your heart?"

She sucked her breath in quick-like and her hand flew to her throat.

Ah, I was right! She was brooding over some brute of a fellow. Well, I'd show him a thing or two when I learned who he was and what he had done to hurt and wound the best sister any fellow in the world ever had. I would! "What'd he say to you?" I asked impulsively.

"Huh? What?" She seemed like she was in a daze. "Who?" she asked suddenly in a very small voice.

"The fellow. The fellow who's breaking your heart?" There! It was out! I asked the question emphatically, my voice rising with something inside my heart.

Again she stared at me. A sad, pitiful kind of stare. "Let's eat, Jerry," she said simply.

We sat down to the table. It was all too obvious that she didn't want to talk.

"You return thanks." She said it with a catch in her voice.

"Return thanks for this.., this slop!" I bellowed, seeing a bowl of chili, a tossed salad and plenty of saltines before me. "You expect me to be thankful for this!" I was glad father and mother weren't home and I must admit that right then I felt quite a bit superior to Suzanne. I guess I carried my 'superior' feeling too far, for Suzanne burst into tears and rushed out the door.

I ate supper alone that night. Believe me, it wasn't the pleasantest supper I have ever eaten: I felt miserable and almost hated myself for acting such a bear. Suzanne was a great sister. Never pushy and bossy nor hateful. Her chili was excellent too; and I was sorry I had called it slop. Oh, how I wished she was a Christian! I had tried to tell her it was a wonderful way but she seemed unconvinced. Unwilling to believe me.

I finished eating and, to appease my conscience for having acted as I had, I washed and dried every single dirty dish I found in the sink and the counter top then I gathered my books together and headed upstairs to study.

Going down the hallway to my bedroom, I saw a sheet of paper... half-in, half-out of Suzanne's bedroom. I stooped and gathered it in my hands then hurried to my own room. I dropped the books on the desk and, leaning back in the chair, I

proceeded to read the little missile I had gleaned from the floor. The minute I began reading I knew I was intruding in Suzanne's private life; but once started, I couldn't stop.

"Oh, God! Dear God !" she wrote. (It was a cry for help, I felt.)

"I do want to know You. But how do I go about finding You! Jerry has talked to me (times without number) about becoming a Christian; but I don't want his brand. Please, God, I don't want what he says he has! He professes to love You and the way of the cross, but he's a hypocrite. A bear!

"He listens to music I wouldn't think of listening to and he sneaks around to the Mallott's and watches television with Gary every chance he gets. (Marianne told me he does.) Then, too, I never hear him pray nor see him read his Bible. We have family worship together here, it's true, but Jerry never enters into it with glad expectancy of spirit and joyful and eager anticipation like I feel a real Christian should and would do if he knew You.

"Oh, God, is there any hope for me? I have wanted Thee. My heart is so hungry for Thee. Is there something real for a young person such as I? Something satisfying and abiding for my heart? I have been searching the Scriptures daily, and according to Thy Word there is something genuine and real for even me! Oh, why art Thou so long in coming into my heart! Give me the real thing... not the sham like Jerry"

The paper dropped from my hands to the floor. I felt the blood draining from my face and I seemed to be going suddenly numb. I was ashamed of myself. Ashamed! I was a deceiver. What's more, I was deceived!

Suzanne's heart plea (put on paper, and meant for her eyes only to see and read) had done for me what none of Rev. Worthington's, sermons could do: it showed me where I stood with God and too, it opened my eyes to something else: I hadn't fooled Suzanne! She knew my real relationship with God. Yes, Suzanne's note of desperation did for me what no sermon could do!

Like a chunk of lead I dropped on my knees beside the chair. Feeling so wretched and miserable and undone. I purposed not to come out until I was truly a born-again Christian, a new creature in Christ.

To think that I was the bully who had been breaking my sister's heart! It was almost more than I could bear. My hypocrisy might have given her an abhorrence so dreadful..., for spiritual things... until it could have landed her in hell. And all because of me!

I had never really prayed before. Said words, yes; but never prayed. Now, with the fountain of my heart broken to tiny bits and with the real me exposed, prayer came

easily, freely. I told the Lord just how hypocritical I was; how hateful, wretched and mean, and how utterly devoid of His presence I had always been. How long I prayed I can't tell. But I stayed in that closet until heaven's peace and joy ran over my soul like billows of water. I knew I was converted. I didn't need to pretend. This was real. I could hardly believe I was myself . . . so drastic and wonderful was the change in my heart and life.

With happy tears swimming in my eyes I tackled my home work. I was there when Suzanne came upstairs and went into her room, closing the door softly behind her.

"Suzanne," I called, tapping lightly on the door. "I'd like to talk to you." There was no answer.

I tried again. "Suzanne, can you forgive me for my deceit and hypocrisy? I'm sorry. I asked the Lord to forgive and He has. I'm saved, Suzanne. Truly converted and born-again. I'm a new creature in Christ..."

The door flew open and Suzanne stood framed in the doorway, her great blue eyes searching my face eagerly. "Are you, Jerry? Really and truly are you converted? Does your heart have peace?"

"Complete peace and inner rest and joy," I answered. "And Suzanne, I'd like for you to find Jesus and get this wonderful soul rest and peace. I'm not a hypocrite this time, Suzanne . . . no hypocrite playing church: this is for real!"

"Oh, Jerry, I've been so hungry for God that I thought I'd die! I've been searching so long but your inconsistent life kept constant doubts swirling in my mind until . . ."

"Let me pray with you," I interrupted quickly, wanting to forget the old Jerry.

"Oh, Jerry, would you please?" Tears were spilling down over Suzanne's cheeks and dropping into the apron she still had around her slender waist.

In the hallway we knelt, Suzanne and I. I never before realized how easily and naturally prayer comes to the child of God. But then, I had never been converted before. It was a mere acceptance of Christ that never went deeper or farther than the head with me. But now, with the Giver of peace in my heart, I prayed! Suzanne felt the difference too and prayed with great fervency of spirit and in less time than I can tell it, she pushed through and made contact with heaven.

Normally, Suzanne is quiet and reserved in her disposition but she wasn't quiet when she prayed through. Not at all! She raced downstairs like a fleeing deer of the mountains and shouted all through the house. She was still shouting when father and

mother came home. They joined her and it started all over again. I tell you, we had a time (I joined in too.)

I felt wonderful. I was delivered and forgiven. I felt a deep abhorrence for those things I had previously liked and desired, and my soul now felt a pull toward the Word of God and prayer. I had just begun to live. I felt it all through me. And after I became sanctified, I knew I'd know what real living was!

With zest, I headed back to my desk., to study. Even this took a brighter turn for me. I hummed softly as I opened the first book on top of the pile.

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THE END