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## Shattered Dreams

By Mrs. Paul E. King

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Lenore brushed a hand across her red, swollen eyes as she sat in the front church pew gazing at the casket before her. Was this real or was she dreaming, she wondered wearily. But no, Reverend Taylor's voice was no dream. He was proclaiming with no uncertain tone of voice, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." Rev. 14:13.

"Mother! Mother! Oh, dearest mother!" she sobbed brokenly into her handkerchief.



**Sandra soon fell in love with Lenore.**

Beside her sat Aunt Helen, the next nearest of kin. Behind her were more distant relatives; behind them, the many friends of Mrs. Mary Otterbein, "beloved wife of the late Matthew Otterbein", Rev. Taylor had said, in reading the obituary.

Soon, ah soon now, Lenore knew she would hear the sad words intone from the minister's lips, "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust..."

She moved uneasily in the church pew. Aunt Helen, herself a devout Christian woman of deep piety, reached a comforting hand over and enclosed Lenore's small one in a warm clasp of understanding sympathy.

She followed the casket from the church to the open graveside in back of the church, walking like one in a dream. Loved ones and friends offered sympathetic and heartfelt condolences. She appreciated their every kindness and told them so.

Aunt Helen went to the cottage with her. "Why not come and live with me, Lenore?" she asked. "It has been quite lonesome for me since your Uncle died. You'd be good company for me..."

Lenore looked with pitying eyes upon her Aunt. "You are such a dear, Aunt Helen. I do appreciate your offer. It has come from a heart of love and compassion, I know. But I . . . I couldn't bear leaving the.., home place. Everything in here is... almost sacred," she said softly. "Mother became dearer and more precious to me as I nursed her and cared for her. Then, too, no one can run away from his heartaches and sorrows; they have a subtle way of following you. Besides, this has been the only place I've ever known. It's truly home to me."

Aunt Helen's wrinkled old hands fell lightly and gently on the slender girl's long honey blonde hair. "God bless you, dear child. God bless you!" she said understandingly.

A faint smile crossed Lenore's face. "I love this house, Aunt Helen. It's humble but it is filled with nothing but the dearest and sweetest memories a girl ever had or cherished. I love the garden and orchard! I couldn't possibly forsake it. God will lead me, I'm sure. I'm not alone."

"Your father and mother had a right to be proud of you, my dear Lenore; and I am too. God will lead you!"

"Why couldn't you move in with me, Aunt Helen?" Lenore asked suddenly, brightening up. "The cottage would be pure therapy for you. Mother never did like it... you in those three small apartment rooms."

"I shall pray about it, Lenore, and give you my answer just as soon as I feel clear on what God's will is for me," the older woman promised. "One should always seek God's will for every decision he makes," she added.

Lenore agreed then hurried to the kitchen to prepare a light supper. It was while she was tossing the salad that she saw the dove perched on the limb of a tree outside the kitchen window. Completely unafraid, its eyes followed her every move. Then she heard the soft cooing song. For a long while she paused in her work, listening and watching. The soft melancholy song had a soothing effect upon her broken heart. It comforted her immensely. Had God sent the gentle bird there for that purpose, she wondered. Bowing her head, she thanked Him for the dove .... a type of everything good and peaceable and gentle. What the future held for her she knew not; one thing she was sure of... she knew the God of the past, the present and the future. He

would guide her aright.

They retired to their rooms early that night, the strain of the funeral taxing both Lenore and Aunt Helen. As she unloosed the long honey blonde coil of hair and let it cascade down her back her thoughts drifted as they were prone to do, to Stephen. Where was he? Missing in action, the letter to his mother had said. But Lenore couldn't believe it. Not yet. He was completely and unreservedly surrendered to God and to His will. Was this a part of God's will? They had had such great and noble dreams of a future life together: Upon his return home, to be exact. That was to have been the wedding date... "As soon as I come home, Lenore," he had written her.

"Oh Steve! Steve!" she exclaimed, picking his picture up from the dresser and looking at the clean-cut, handsome face that smiled back at her from beneath the glass. "Oh Steve! -- Mother!"

Completely exhausted, Lenore threw herself across the spread and wept freely, her only comfort coming from a kind, compassionate and understanding Heavenly Father.

In her exhausted state she fell asleep. As she slept, she dreamed. She was in a hospital; neither large nor small. Around her were the sick and the suffering. They were reaching out to her with thin, emaciated, pleading hands. "Help us!" They moaned in a pitiful wail. "We need you!" they cried.

Little children, hearing the sad plaintive cries of the adults, hurried down the spotlessly clean corridors in wheel chairs or on crutches and stretchers. Seeing Lenore's kind face and tender eyes, they too begged for help.

With a sudden start, Lenore awoke. She sat up abruptly. Her body was wet with perspiration. Perplexed, she brushed a trembling hand across her forehead. "Oh God, what can this mean?" she asked.

"I have a work for you." The answer was as clear and as distinct as if her own dear mother had voiced it to her.

"My Lord and my God!" Lenore exclaimed as she fell on her knees in humility. "Where?" she asked softly.

"In the hospital" -- came back the reply to her soul.

"Anywhere, Lord," Lenore answered reverently, tearfully. "Anything."

She finished her preparation for bed, turned the light off then slid easily between the silky smooth sheets. She felt suddenly remarkably relaxed. For a long time she lay and pondered over the new revelation of God to her. Life had many

strange and interesting paths, she soliloquized, and to the child of God whose life was totally and unreservedly surrendered to Christ in utter abandonment of self, each path was plainly and clearly defined and marked; all such an one need do was to follow unquestioningly. A deep peace and surge of joy flooded her soul. She was soon sleeping soundly.

She awakened the following morning to the soft cooing of the dove. Hurrying to the window she saw it perched on a limb directly in front of where she was standing. It surveyed her critically for an instant then continued its singing. Lenore's heart beat for joy. It was as if the Lord was telling her the long winter of mourning was past and that a new day had dawned.., a day of bright promise and restored hope.

She dressed hastily, combed her long hair, and spent a great while on her knees in prayer and Bible reading and silent meditation ere going to the kitchen. Since Aunt Helen was still sleeping, Lenore walked out into the garden and orchard. The pungent, heady scent of apple, peach and pear blossoms hung heavy in the air. All around her bees buzzed busily and noisily. It all spelled peace and rest to her soul.

On the banks of the gurgling, laughing stream frogs, ten thousand strong it seemed, were having their annual spring choir rehearsal. What better more fitting environment than this to heal a broken heart, she thought.., a heart broken by sorrow and shattered dreams.

A Scripture spoke suddenly to her: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 54:8-9.

Yes, God knew what He was doing. Not always could one see immediately the pattern or design and plan of the All-Wise God but by patient waiting and an unrelenting yieldedness and submission to whatever He deemed fitting and wise, eventually the full-orbed, complete and beautiful design would appear and be revealed.

Lenore found solace in the thought. He knew why He had permitted her to suffer the loss of her holy father, then the heartbreak of Stephen and now the loss of a mother much loved and cherished.

After prolonged meditation beside the stream she walked reluctantly back to the cottage where she found Aunt Helen busy with the breakfast.

"I have my answer for you, Lenore," the older woman said, smiling sweetly. "I'll move into the cottage with you. You will be needing a housekeeper . . ." She paused long and significantly. "God has a work for you to do. A very special work," she added emphatically.

"I know," Lenore answered softly. "But how shall I go about it? I mean what..."

"Never you mind, dear girl, God will open the door for you! Wait upon Him."

"Thank you, Aunt Helen. I will."

Two days later a call came to the cottage for Lenore. "I have hesitated to call," the voice on the other end of the line said, "but I can't get you out of my mind. This is Mrs. Sumpter from the hospital," she said, "in case you didn't recognize my voice..."

"Yes, I knew it was you, Mrs. Sumpter."

"Good. Now, as I stated previously, I hesitated calling you due to your over-burdened body and recent deep sorrow; but your excellent nursing ability during your mother's prolonged illness coupled with your gentle touch and manner, has been observed carefully and . . ."

"But it was a joy to care for mother, Mrs. Sumpter. A privilege, really!"

"Indeed it was!" the woman answered. "Yours was a labor of love. Didn't all of us in the community see that! Well, to get to the point, Lenore, we need someone like you at the hospital. Right now, at this very moment, a little girl needs you badly. She's dying with leukemia and needs love. Her parents abandoned her some years ago and she has been shifted from one home to another and is starving for love..., real, genuine love from the heart. The kind you can give her. Would you..., could you spare some of your time to her?"

"I'd be happy to do so!" Lenore exclaimed softly, seeing the faces of those in her dream parading before her. So this was how God was working it out! She was amazed.

"When will you be able to come?" Mrs. Sumpter asked anxiously. "The child's very ill and needs you now . . ."

"I can come today. Any time you want me...."

"At ten this morning, Lenore?"

"I'll be there, Lord willing, Mrs. Sumpter. Ten o'clock."

"Upon your arrival, come into my office, Lenore. I'll instruct you and enlighten you."

That had been the beginning of her dream. Sandra, the nine-year-old leukemia victim, became attracted greatly to Lenore from the start. She loved the Bible stories

Lenore read to her or told her in simple form; and the times when it looked like every minute would be the girl's last and Lenore sat by the bed praying silently or whispering soft prayers above the little head as she held the small hand tenderly and lovingly, bound the pair in unending love and affection or each other.

Sandra was an eager learner of spiritual things and soon, under Lenore's prayerful and loving guidance, the girl was gloriously converted and sanctified. She became a joyous and radiant little Christian and departed this life with a shout of triumph on her lips.

"They're here, Lenore! They've come after me!" she shouted. "Good-bye, sweet nurse. I love you. I'll see you soon..."

It was Lenore and Aunt Helen who saw to the funeral arrangements of the little earthly outcast and had her small form laid in the family plot to await the resurrection of the righteous and the just. It seemed only fitting, Lenore asserted to her aunt, that the child be buried among the righteous... the godly.

So deeply engrossed in helping others was Lenore that her own sorrows and heartbreak faded into total oblivion and when her dream became full reality as she helped and assisted the aged, the infirmed, as well as the young, and many of them were gloriously converted and sanctified, she raised her tear-filled eyes heavenward and praised God for "shattered dreams -- my dreams. I have found Thy will!" she exclaimed happily.

She sighed a tired but happy sigh. She was content -- in the will of God!

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**THE END**