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## Everything To Lose

By Mrs. Paul E. King

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"Doctor Frank. Doctor Frank". The impersonal voice called into the intercom and the message was carried to every floor in the hospital. "Doctor Frank. C C U."

With quick easy strides the doctor walked briskly down the spotlessly clean hospital corridor to the nearest elevator. He pushed the button and waited impatiently for it to arrive.

"Doctor Frank, C C U," the voice was urgent.

Turning quickly, the sandy-haired doctor found the nearest exit and ran down the four flights of steps to the Coronary Care Unit. It was Mr. Cameron. The doctor knew it before he got there. There was nothing more he . . . nor any other medical man . . . could do. The man was in the hands of God. If He didn't undertake -- well...

He paused briefly outside the closed door of the unit, trying desperately to regain his composure; to think of some word of comfort he could give the dying man but his lips seemed sealed. Death was especially dreadful in some cases... like Mr. Cameron, for instance. It upset the doctor no little bit.

Stepping briskly inside he hastened to the bed.



He walked over to the window and gazed down at the moving traffic.

"Doctor Frank! Doctor Frank, I . . . I'm dying!" O the hopeless sound in the man's weak voice His eyes were already glassy looking but he peered hopefully at his doctor. "Help... me! Please! Can't ..you? I... I'm dying... I'm ... dying... I'm... not ... ready .. to die! Eternity... will be... endless! Do something, Doctor! Do something . . . for me. Please! .. I... need more.., than medicine . . ."

Patting the man's hand comfortingly and checking the oxygen gauge, Doctor Frank tried vainly to recall that verse; something or other about confessing sins and God loving the sinner enough to die for him; but his brain seemed to have ceased functioning where spiritual things were concerned.

"Pray for me, Doctor!" The dying voice pleaded in what was barely a whisper. "Please, pray for me. I'm lost! I can't die! I can't!"

"You'll be all right, Mr. Cameron. You'll be all right," Doctor Frank soothed, lying. "Try to relax and be calm. You'll breathe easier if you calm yourself..."

"But... I'm a dying man!" the figure in the bed gasped, his voice distraught, his face ashen white, great beads of perspiration all the while standing out like blisters over his body. "Pray!" He urged again as another paroxysm of pain seized him and his breath left the body in a final "poof". The doctor pulled the sheet tenderly over the man's face.

Doctor Frank finished his hospital calls early then hurried to his office down-town. He closed the door behind him and sat down behind his desk, deep in thought. A stack of the latest medical journals were piled neatly on the corner of the mammoth desk. He should be checking through them again, he knew, regarding a certain case, but he couldn't erase the pleading eyes of Mr. Cameron from his mind. He knew that until his own mind was calm and collected there was no need for pretense of reading.

He walked over to the window and stood with folded arms gazing down at the street of busy moving traffic and hurrying people. In spite of a torrential rain and gusty winds of tremendous force, the shoppers moved on the street beneath him as if all were sunshine and brightness.

The doctor sighed heavily and walked nervously back to the desk, the storm and struggle within his heart of far greater force and intensity than that raging on the outside. And all because of Miriam!

He thought of her again. Somehow, she had a way of haunting him . . . day and night. Why had she broken in upon his 'easy' satisfied life, he wondered. After all these years too! Could it be God had a hand in it?

He recalled quickly the events which brought about his uneasiness. His unrest. It seemed strange now that he and Marie could ever have looked upon their meeting his cousin (whom he remembered only from childhood) as a pleasant thing -- a thing to be greatly desired. A day was planned and a time set when both Miriam and her husband and he and Marie met again. It was a memorable day, really. Enjoyable, too. Completely different perhaps from what he and Marie had anticipated. They had thought Miriam and Paul would be like all their acquaintances . . . light, frivolous and worldly-wise. But such was not the case. This pair was deeply religious and, what's more, spiritual! Their entire language and vocabulary was centered around and based upon the things of God. For many weeks and months after that re-acquaintance, the memory of that visit lingered like a haunting melody in his memory.

He stirred uneasily in his chair. The visit had awakened something which he thought had long since been dead and forgotten within him. And that prayer Paul prayed before they separated! Doctor Frank realized suddenly that he had never been able to get the words of it out of his memory. It rekindled the spark of a long burned-out fire within him. He couldn't get away from it, that was all there was to it. No need to try.

He paced nervously back and forth across the plush carpet in his office. How long was it since he had felt God's presence in his heart and life? He made a hasty mental calculation. Twenty nine years! The thought of it staggered him. Shook him.

The light on his desk flickered. In disgust he picked up the phone connecting him with the receptionist in the outer office just off the waiting room. "I thought I told you I didn't wish to be disturbed!" he said shortly into the mouthpiece, trying not to allow over-much of his agitation show in his voice but knowing he had failed miserably.

"I'm sorry, Doctor," the nurse implored, "but there is someone here to see you. She insists upon seeing you..."

"Does she have an appointment?" he snapped.

"No, sir. She isn't a patient of yours."

"Then tell her I can't see her!" Doctor Frank insisted stubbornly.

"It's a cousin of yours, Doctor. Said she's in the city on business and..."

"A cousin. What's her name?" "Miriam Miles, Doctor."

For a long while there was silence on the other end of the line. "Send her in," the doctor said quickly; "and pardon my brusque manner, Miss Murphy."

As she seated herself in one of the chairs in her cousin's office, Miriam spoke softly. "I'll not be long, Gerald," she said. "I realize you're a very busy man. But I had to come. I had to! You and Marie have been weighing heavily on my heart. I've been praying for you." Bright tears fell from her eyes.

"I... appreciate your concern," the doctor admitted.

"All day yesterday the Spirit of God impressed me strongly to come and see you today. I knew I'd find you here ... although visiting hours don't begin for another couple of hours."

Gerald's eyes rested enigmatically upon her for a moment. "Under ordinary circumstances, Miriam, I wouldn't be in my office for another hour or hour-and-a-half; or more."

"Right, Gerald. But these are not ordinary circumstances. Today is different. You are facing a crisis. A very grave and important crisis. It's a spiritual crisis."

The doctor was amazed. How did she know? Without preamble his words came out in a flurry of excitement as, rising to his feet he faced his cousin. "How did you know, Miriam? How? I've been in a veritable hell ever since Marie and I saw you and Paul those many months ago. Only today I lied to a patient of mine because I had nothing to give him as an anchor for his soul; no rope to throw him to rescue his soul from hell. And to think I might have helped him! I might have . . . if I had never gone back on the Lord. O Miriam, I'm wretched and miserable. What shall I do? What shall I do?"

"This spiritual crisis you are facing is a crucial time, Gerald. A very crucial and important time in your life. What you do today will determine

where you will spend eternity -- Heaven or Hell. The choice rests upon what you do here and now."

Again the doctor paced the floor. "You don't know what this will mean to me... do to me... if I get back on the path of righteousness, Miriam!" He insisted, his face registering agony. "What will my children think? I've brought them up to be worldly-wise. Marie too. She resents this old fashioned way. She loves the world. I'm afraid the price is too great."

"Look, Gerald, you will lose everything worth anything if you don't pay the price of repentance and restitution and get back to God. I feel strongly that it is because of your godly grandmother's prayers (she's mine too, remember) that our paths crossed again as they have after these many, many years. God willed it this way.., to try to woo you and win you back again. Make a brand new start, Gerald. Get converted and sanctified wholly and see if God won't work in your home. Take up the cross again. You'll find it back there where you laid it down."

Take up! Get converted! Sanctified! The struggle within was fierce, the battle tremendous, and the forces of hell mighty and strong.

"Doctor Frank, C C U." He heard that impersonal voice again. Suddenly he was back in the coronary care unit, bending helplessly over the dying form of Eli Cameron. Suppose that had been him! Suppose. . .

"O Miriam!" His voice came in great sobs. "I know I'm not ready to die. But the price..."

" 'What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?' Gerald?"

"I know! I know! But Marie? The children . . . I've failed them miserably where spiritual things are concerned; and now they're all married and have their own homes and living as they were brought up to live...!"

"Do you choose rather to go to hell and be forever lost? And take Marie and the children with you there, Gerald?" The question was poignant. "There is hope of their salvation if you will do the manly thing and turn to God with all your heart."

"I see it!" he exclaimed suddenly. "I have led them far enough downward." He dropped on his knees. Miriam was beside him quickly, praying fervently.

The hands of the clock on the wall in the outer office pointed to a quarter after one as the new Doctor Gerald Frank opened the door and escorted Miriam through the exit door. A shining, radiant face bade her farewell.

"I'm ready for my first patient," he told the receptionist pleasantly before he stepped back into his office.

Standing in front of the window watching the busy world beneath him and waiting for his first patient to enter, Doctor Frank said aloud, "A great couple... Miriam and Paul! A spiritual couple. Different too. Strangely but wonderfully different!"

"Mrs. Lillian Gremlin, Doctor," the receptionist's voice broke through his soliloquy. Smiling, and with peace in his heart, he turned from the window to the immediate task. A task he no longer feared. He had something to give his patients. Something more than medicine! And it would be even greater after he was sanctified wholly!

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**THE END**