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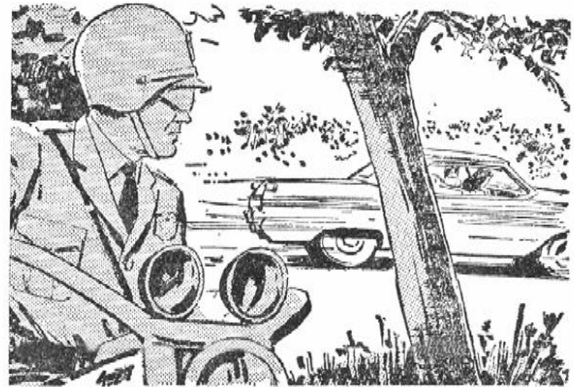
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## Out Of The Hands Of The Wicked

By Mrs. Paul E. King

From the October 22, 1972 Sunday School Beacon

Loretta walked leisurely down the sidewalk away from Rockport High, a stack of books cradled in her arm. Her mind was deep on the math test scheduled for the following day. She would have to study extra hard and long, she knew, were she to maintain her present status as the number one honor student. From her earliest encounter with it she liked math, but calculus . . . well, that was something else. Comparatively speaking, it had a way of eluding her. She would hurry home, she decided quickly, and do the household chores assigned her then spend some time in prayer over the difficult problems. God had helped her before; He would help her again. She had nothing but utmost confidence in Him and His power.., as she cooperated with Him.



"Help!" she shrieked, "Help!"

She had walked four blocks when a car pulled up to the curb and a familiar voice called, "Get in. I'll take you home." It was Greg Malison, a classmate. Already he was out of the car and opening the door for her.

"Thanks, Greg," Loretta said, seating herself inside the late model sports car. "These books are quite a load! Say! Where are yours? The big exam's tomorrow and if I know Mr. Gizelle it will be another hard one!"

Greg laughed loudly at her. "Books! Who cares about books? I'll get by. I always do. Besides," he looked at her out of the corner of his eye, "I have a friend.."

Loretta sucked her breath in quick-like, at the same time her hand flew to her throat. "Greg!" she exclaimed in astonishment. "Greg, you.., you're not implying that you'd.., cheat?"

"Maybe I am." A half-smile played at the corners of his mouth as he drove away.

"But... but that's sinful! It's wrong, Greg!"

"And who says it's sinful, may I ask? So long as a fellow doesn't get caught it's perfectly legitimate and all right. No one's ever seen me -- yet.., and Mr. Gizelle's none the wiser!"

"But God sees you, Greg! . . . And . . . and you profess to be a Christian too!" Loretta sat for some time in stunned silence as Greg headed the car down Lakeshore Drive. "You... you should come to our church services," she said. "Our pastor preaches all the Word to us...; not just a part of it as you say your preacher does. Oh, Greg, I'd be bored stiff if all we heard were essays and lectures at church..."

"Maybe I am," the sandy-haired youth said emphatically, "but at least Doctor Hurliss doesn't bother our consciences by preaching against our 'sins', as you term it. Why, Loretta, we can do anything. Anything!" His hands left the steering wheel and flew upwards emphatically.

"That still doesn't make it right to do wrong, Greg. Sin is still exceeding sinful in God's sight."

"Aw, lay off! Will you? Learn to live, Loretta. I am. I'm in the 'KNOW CLUB' and..."

Loretta gasped. "You can't be serious!" she exclaimed incredulously. "Oh Greg, no! Not you!" She buried her face in her hands. "You told me you were a Christian . . ." Her voice came out small and weak.

"I am. I joined the church and was baptized. Doctor Hurliss told me that was all that was necessary..."

"But he lied to you!" Loretta interrupted emphatically. Seeing Greg speed in the opposite direction from her home she exclaimed, "What's the big idea! Where are you going? I thought you were taking me home."

"I am... after awhile," he said lightly. "I'm going to show you a thing or two..."

"Greg, no! Turn around and take me home. Mother will be worried."

"When I'm ready, I'll take you home. You're going with me to the clubhouse . . . the KNOW CLUB. I'm going to introduce you to some things . . . some 'way-out' things like . . ."

"Greg! No! You'll not change me."

A wild look crossed Greg's face. "You promised me a date someday, Loretta... if I ever became a Christian. Remember? Well, by the standards of my church and Doctor Hurliss I am a Christian. For this day -- and night you are my date."

Loretta was frightened beyond words now. "You know that I had no intentions of dating you, Greg ... unless you gave sound and good evidence that you were a true Christian. A born again Christian and really sanctified."

"Who cares what you meant? I have you in the car and I'm going to show you a thing or two. You don't know what living is, Loretta. See? I'm a bird! I can fly! Look out! Here we go, you and I, sailing through the air --" With those words he accelerated heavily. The car lunged forward with intense speed. Loretta cast a frightened glance out of the corner of her eye and saw the needle move crazily on the 110 mark; then 120. Greg looked wild. Excited! He was on drugs. She knew it! She knew it!

"Greg! Please!" she begged. "Like it? he laughed crazily and made idiotic signs and signals. "We're flying! Flying ... flying..."

"Greg! You... you... Look out!" she screamed as he swerved just in time to miss an approachmg truck. "You're on drugs, Greg," she said quickly. "Slow down and pull off the road. Let me drive."

"Ha! Ha!" He mocked. "Of course I'm on drugs. Who cares! This thing's really workin' on me," he slurred the words. "I can fly! You're flying with me. See?" and he accelerated more.

Loretta bowed her head and prayed silently, fervently. If either one of them got out of the car alive it would be only because of God's goodness and mercy, she knew. "Help me, dear Lord!" she cried in desperation. In that very moment she knew that she must never again toy with the idea of dating any boy other than those she knew to be truly converted and sanctified wholly. Being a Christian was far more than having a dead, dry profession. "Please, Lord, help me. Deliver me from this.., this maniac..."

She raised her head in time to see a police on a motorcycle.., hiding alongside the road.

"HELP!" she shrieked out the open window. "HELP!"

"What you think you're doing?" Greg asked angrily. "We're flying.., to the KNOW CLUB. You'll learn things there, Loretta. Why the gang will show you how to forget your worries and troubles and . . . and you'll even see a real witch!" He whispered the last sentence as if he were afraid someone other than herself might hear.

Loretta shuddered. She had heard of dope rings in the school; also that many of the students were dabbling in the occult, the seance, and with the ouija board; and witchcraft even! But she could hardly believe that she had heard Greg rightly.., a real witch, he said! And to think that he was a part of all this devilry and wickedness! How many others of her classmates and associates were involved, she wondered.

Greg turned onto a deserted looking, isolated piece of road now with woods on either side.

"God! -- please help me!" Loretta pleaded. "I'm your child and You said, 'The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him and delivereth them.' Please, I'm trusting You!"

On and on Greg sped, down the dusty road. Loretta had the gritty taste of sand in her mouth and felt as if she would choke on the dust. In spite of the heat she rolled her window up. Where was Greg taking her? She must try to remember every turn, every street and road down which Greg had brought her thus far. It may be valuable information some day, she reasoned. She had never before been afraid of Greg but now she was nearly petrified with fright. He was completely different from the Greg she knew at school.

At a final turn in the road a large cabin loomed up before them. Constructed of part stone and logs it was a fitting specimen of a building to be nestled cozily and snugly in among towering fir, pine and spruce trees which were so dense as to cut out all sunlight and shade the rustic looking cabin in what appeared to be early evening.

"Get out!" Greg ordered as he slid out from under the steering wheel from where the car keys dangled. He slammed the door shut and started a tottery walk around to Loretta's side of the car.

Acting quickly, Loretta locked her door then slid easily behind the steering wheel. The starter turned over beautifully. With a quick reverse thrust she was out on the road, speeding down the way she had come. Her heart was beating wildly, fiercely. Suppose someone should follow her, chase her! "Oh God help. me! Help me now!" She was crying.

She was almost to the main road when she saw the policeman speeding toward her. Without thinking, she applied the brakes and was out of the car. "Oh help me, please!" she exclaimed, whereupon she told him everything that had happened. "They're meeting down there!" she cried. "In the cabin. It's a wicked place! Drugs, witches and everything ...."

"Follow my instructions," the policeman ordered quickly. "Park the car here . . . just as you have done. Let them think you're hiding in the woods. They'll be looking for you no doubt. More of our men are coming. I called in when I heard you scream back there along the way. I'll have one of our men take you home. Two of us will hide and shadow the cabin to see what we can uncover..."

"I . . . I'm frightened!" Loretta said, trembling violently. "They'll soon be here searching for me."

"Here's Patrolman Kelly. He'll run you home. Mr. Stully and I'll take care of things till he gets back here. Get in the car," he ordered.

All the way home the patrolman questioned Loretta. It was a relief to talk. In front of the door she exclaimed suddenly, "Oh my books! My math book! They're all in Greg's car and we're having a big exam tomorrow, Lord willing!"

"Thanks for the information, Miss Anniston," the police said. "I'd better be getting back. The men may need me. Don't worry about your books. . ."

Later in the night, as Loretta was in the bedroom praying, a knock sounded on the Anniston door.

Hurrying to answer it, Mr. Anniston saw a policeman on his porch. "Come in," he invited.

"I would like to see your daughter," the policeman said.

Mr. Anniston called for Loretta. At sight of her a pleased smile broke out over the policeman's face. Stepping forward, he shook her hand. "I want to thank you, young lady," he said, "for helping us to break one of the biggest and worst dope rings in this area." It was the policeman who had been hiding behind the scrub brush along the highway as Greg took Loretta down the highway on the wildest ride she had ever had.

"For many, many months," he continued, "we've been watching certain houses and areas as well as certain characters. But you led us to the main building.., the isolated cabin! Thanks for all the information you gave. And oh, yes, your books! Lieutenant Kelly told me of your concern over the books. Good luck on that exam tomorrow!" he exclaimed brightly. "You'll make that honor roll again . . . sure enough! God will help you. Lieutenant Kelly told me what you said about God helping His children.., and it's true. He'll help you. And oh, one thing more, continue living the Christian life. We never worry about young folks such as you. You're the cream of the crop. The salt of the earth!"

After he had gone and Loretta was poring industriously over her books, she said softly aloud, " 'The salt of the earth,' did he say? Why, he was quoting from Jesus' sermon on the mount, whether he realized it or not." Then she bowed her head gratefully and thanked God again for delivering her "out of the hands of the wicked."

A sudden question struck her. How did the police know she was an honor student? Then she knew. "Those men sure do a lot of checking up on a person," she said as her mother passed her room. "I'm glad my record's clean. I have nothing to hide nor to fear. By God's grace I mean to keep my 'heart' record.., the inner life... just as clean and clear, Mother."

"Thank God!" Mrs. Anniston exclaimed, kissing the girl lightly.

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**THE END**