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## Out Of The Storm

By Mrs. Paul E. King

From the October 29, 1972 Sunday School Beacon

"I'm going if I have to go alone!"  
Frank Connelly declared in no uncertain  
tone to his friend.

"I'm sorry, Frank. I really am. I  
looked forward to this hunting trip as much  
as you; but I must work tomorrow, Lord  
willing. Boss's orders. When one's a  
working man he has to take orders," Ernie  
remonstrated.

"O. K., O. K! Go ahead and work. I  
told my boss I was taking the day off and  
that was that!" Frank exclaimed stubbornly. "He put up quite a fuss for awhile but I  
told him I'd call in sick tomorrow morning unless he allowed me to go. I can be just as  
slick as the other fellows who work in the shop!" he added.



### Why didn't he heed Ernie's advice?

"You . . . you mean you'd have lied?" Ernie asked, incredulity registering in his  
voice. "Lied, to get the day off to go hunting, Frank?" he asked again in shocked  
disbelief.

Surreptitiously, Frank snarled, "Everybody else does! Why not? You're too soft,  
Ernie. It won't get you anywhere."

Ignoring the barbed thrust, Ernie tossed the string of traps he had dangling over  
his shoulder on the floor of the work shed. "Better be careful, Frank. Where you're  
going is treacherous country and, well" he paused momentarily, "well, like I said, it's

dangerous unless you know the area and are well acquainted with that part of our beautiful land."

"Guess I haven't lived in these parts for nearly eighteen years without learning some things!" Frank snapped stubbornly. "Just because you're the A-1 trapper and guide in this area doesn't mean that some of the rest of us are fools and dunces, does it?"

Ernie started cleaning one of the big traps. Seeing that further conversation about the land acted only to irritate his friend, he said simply, "I hope you have a good time, Frank; and a safe journey home." He knew Frank. He knew too that when he had worked his mind into its present state of stubbornness, nothing nor anybody could change him. "I'll be praying," he added seriously.

Frank spat contemptuously on to the floor. "Look, Randolph," he exploded, using Ernie's last name, "that won't be necessary. Who needs God! No one! You know I don't believe in Him!"

Non-plused, Ernie continued to work on his traps, being careful to hang each in a proper place on the wall as he finished it. "Good luck to you on your trip, Frank," he said softly.

After Frank had gone and the work shed door closed behind him, Ernie made his way to the altar in the shed. It was nothing more or less than an old tree stump he had carried in for the purpose. As on so many other occasions, he poured out his soul in fervent, intercessory prayer on behalf of his friend.

The hour was late when he made his way from the shed to the cheery light that glowed from his ranch house across the drifted snow.

"I'll have to leave the house a bit earlier in the morning," he told Marian his wife as they retired for the night. "The trap line's growing." He laughed good naturedly.

"The Lord willing, I'm going with you one of these mornings again," his wife declared. "I'll bundle up good and warm and..."

Ernie reached over and lightly caressed the hand of his life's companion of better than thirty-seven years. "I'd love that, Marian," he said earnestly, "but until you are stronger I shall have to say 'no.' Tell you what you can do though. . ."

"Yes?"

"I have an uncanny feeling that all's not going to be well with Frank Connelly tomorrow. You can pray, Marian."

"What's the matter with him?"

"You remember he wanted to go hunting: I was planning on going with him until the boss said there's too much work at the office right now for me to take a day off. But Frank's going. He was greatly upset because I wouldn't go. Because I wouldn't tell my boss 'off.' He's not well enough acquainted with the area into which he's going hunting, Marian. That can be a death trap this time of year. Why, a snow storm can come up and drop on those hills with little or no warning and foreboding whatever."

"I'll remain home and pray then," Marian answered softly.

Very early the following morning Ernie arose, fixed a hearty breakfast of bacon, eggs and hash browns and, after downing several cups of steaming hot coffee and filling a thermos bottle with the same, he hurried to the shed and the altar, where he spent well over an hour on his knees in prayer and with his Bible.

The smell of drying pelts hung heavy in the room. It was a good odor; one which the veteran trapper loved. He inspected the pelts, hanging on their stretcher frames from pegs fastened to rafters across the shed. They were beauties. Every one of them.

His heart beat with excitement as he fastened snow shoes on his feet and slung traps across his shoulder. Picking up his gun, he started out into the early morning. He followed the hill downward toward the creek. A wary coyote, every now and again, cast anxious, curious but furtive glances at the lone, rapidly moving figure of the man as he approached too near the wild animal's hunting grounds then, noiselessly, he disappeared and was swallowed up in the night shadows.

Ernie preferred this time of day to all others. A quiet atmosphere, so holy, sacred and reverent, made high noon pale under the spell of what he sensed and felt as he made the rounds of his trap line before departing for the office at nine. He loved the outdoors as adamantly as he hated paper work -- which he did none-the-less, with great diligence and utmost care, for was he not a representative of Christ! His supervisory and office duties were performed therefore with nothing less than his best.

Several of the traps netted nothing. Carefully he checked them for loss of bait. Some were sprung and had to be rebaited and reset while still others yielded prized furs.

He was coming near to Kendall Springs, he knew. He could tell it by what he saw. Graced with subtle year-round beauty, the spring was most resplendent in winter. The snow lay deep and high, its sparkling whiteness highlighting the brilliant emerald greens of aquatic plants. A dense mist rose from the warm waters, shrouding the immediate area, creating an aura of surrealism and cloaking the nearby willows and sage with a fine, flimsy negligee of frost.

Ernie paused, breathless with awe as moonbeams transformed the area into one of fantasy. Near-by, a bull moose, his cumbersome looking rack towering above the bushes upon which he was feeding, splashed noisily in the water. For a long while the man stood motionless, his mind on the greatness and goodness of God. In a land otherwise beset and bound with ice and snow, God had made this little oasis.., a winter oasis, really... to which wild life was greatly attracted.

It was a wonderful place he thought. For before surfacing, the spring-fed water passed through one or more strata of soluble rock. As a result the water contained fairly high concentrations of dissolved salts and minerals.., causing the water temperatures to seldom drop below 83 degrees in winter even! Yes, the Lord was wonderful, he reasoned, caring even for the forest creatures He had created. It was a good thought, this. A comforting thought.

He hurried along. Leaving the creek bed, he turned sharply and headed upward. The trees were getting denser now and, as he continued climbing, sparser; in that order. He noted with keen awareness the stinging, biting sensation of the wind. Instinctively, he thought of Frank. He was up here somewhere awaiting the break of day. If the feel of the wind (from where he now was) meant anything, Ernie knew it forebode a blizzard. There was that feel in the air. That feel he knew so well. The feel that spelled danger. He sent a fervent prayer upward for the salvation and safety of his friend as he followed the last half of his trap line.

As he came out into the clearing of his ranch, a fine, powdery snow began falling. Before he left for the office, it was coming down thickly and heavily.

Meanwhile, Frank had long since stationed himself near to where, reportedly, was a favorite winter feeding spot for elk. The wind howled and whistled and moaned through the trees, making eerie, ghost-like sounds. Suppose Ernie was right after all; that he shouldn't have come alone, he thought. For the first time since he was a boy, he felt a sudden paroxysm of fear lay hold upon him.

Disgusted, he chided himself for allowing such silly thoughts to disturb him and disrupt his 'free' day. This storm would be no worse than many another he had encountered, he reasoned, edging closer to the trunk of a tree to abate the ferocity of the biting, stinging wind.

Hour after hour the snow fell. Frank's enthusiasm, which ran high in early dawn, had long since waned and crumbled to nothingness. To make matters worse, he hadn't so much as seen a single elk all day. But of course one couldn't expect to see anything in the blinding blizzard, he reasoned as, trying to find his way back to where he had parked the car, he became suddenly and acutely aware of the fact that he was lost.

Panic seized him. He was now in a widened bowl-like clearing of sorts -- at least he couldn't see trees anywhere. The snow, which had long since reached blizzard proportions, had turned the land over which he was stumbling into one vast field of winter fleece. With increased anxiety Frank noticed the severe cold. The icy snow and wind beat furiously upon him.

The sky was now dark and gray. He felt as if he were caught up in the swirling, driving, blinding storm. It was dizzying. On and on he plodded, getting nowhere other than in circles.

Darkness fell early that night and with its premature arrival came more fear. Why hadn't he listened to Ernie, he remonstrated silently. Why? Ernie knew this country like a map. It's treacherous, he had warned. But no, he, Frank Connelly was a 'know-it-all' man. He gulped hard as the hammer of his conscience hit him a staggering blow. Know it all! Well, it was the truth: and today was the first time he had ever been willing to admit it. He was proud. He saw it all now. "You mean you'd have lied, Frank? To go hunting? Lied?" In spite of the raging blizzard, Ernie's voice reached him again . . . loud and clear.

He was perspiring freely now as his sins, one by one, jumped out before him... out of the past; out of the closet in which he thought he had had them hidden. They danced and swirled maddeningly before him with the driving snow.

Where was he? There was no sun in the sky to direct him. No path beneath his feet and no compass... Compass! Frantically Frank searched through his pockets for the compass. "Fool!" he exclaimed aloud into the raging storm, remembering of having set the compass on the dresser before going to bed. It was still there!

Darkness like prison walls fastened him about. The falling blinding snow clung to him like a winding sheet and the cold pierced to his bones. If only he could find a partially sheltered hillock where he could rest. He was tired. So tired!

At last he stumbled into a wooded area. He was thankful. How many or how few trees there were he didn't know. But they were trees. He leaned wearily up against one and although the wind whistled and moaned through them, they did, in a slight measure, cut off some of the bitter cold. Man-high drifts were piled up in nearby places and the ice and snow-covered pines almost blacked out the storm-blackened sky. The stillness was overwhelming. Frank became suddenly drowsy. Uncontrollably drowsy.

"Why go any farther?" he told himself sleepily. "Barbara will notify the forest rangers. They'll be out searching for me . . ."

Deep in the back of his mind the knowledge was trying to push through that they wouldn't possibly be able to find him . . . or anyone . . . in the raging blizzard. He fought to stay awake but his tired eyes got heavier and heavier, in spite of his efforts.

Suddenly, he was having pleasant dreams of wandering through a sun-filled garden with melodic wind chimes sounding out at his every step. It seemed so strange . . . so unreal! The music woke him. The garden faded. But from behind closed eyes, magically, he still heard the chimes!

He opened his eyes. His head was resting on the snow, and he was looking upward. The tinkling was coming from there. He was puzzled. Frightened. He was freezing. Freezing! By degrees! and he... he wasn't ready to die. He wasn't!

"God!" He shouted it to the wind -- the storm. "O God, forgive me! I do believe in You! Be merciful to me a sinner! I can't die like this. I can't. O God, can You hear me? You know I'm not ready to die. I... I'll go to hell... unless You save me and forgive me for all my sins. Please!"

The moaning, shrieking wind seemed only to hurl his pleas for mercy back in his face.

He grew fervent -- earnest. "I'm a wicked, wretched and miserable man," he pled. "Be merciful to me... I'll do anything, Lord. Anything! I'll never again make light of salvation and sanctification if You will but pardon my transgressions and make me a new creature in Christ, like You did for Ernie..."

On and on the man agonized. Suddenly and instantaneously he felt God's saving and transforming power flood his soul. The blizzard was completely forgotten as the sunshine of God's love and peace flooded the man's happy soul.

He heard the chimes again. But this time he wasn't afraid. He realized now what it was.

The pines with their ice-coated limbs were now massed with long, slender icicles, which were bumping together in the wind, making the rich tones of expensive glassware when thumped with a fingernail! But to Frank it seemed more like God's finest musical arrangement than anything.

"The fingers of God testing His crystal!" he said aloud, smiling.

A match. If only he had a match. He sat up abruptly as the thought struck him. The gusts of wind were still rushing at him but he felt wonderfully relaxed, refreshed and new. All over new! With the chimes still ringing in his ears, he fumbled in his pocket for the water-proof match case he carried with him for just such emergencies. Finding it, he tried in vain to start a fire but the wind was too strong. Each time the lighted match was barely more than a faint flicker which was immediately extinguished by a fierce gust of wind.

Deciding there was nothing to do but wait, Frank began praying. It was amazing, he thought, how naturally prayer comes when one is converted. Hour after hour he prayed, the burden on his heart for others motivating and compelling him to agonize. With his fervent praying, his body remained warm.

Along toward dawn he heard a voice. "FRANK! FRANK CONNELLY!" it called loud and strong.

As he rose to meet Ernie... a living snowman, tiny particles of ice coating his entire body, even to frosted eyebrows, lashes and hairline, Frank rejoiced that the ice had melted from his infidel heart and he could meet the man whose life had a tremendous influence for good upon his own, with a new heart. A born again heart He stepped out into the clearing, answering the call. Someday he would answer another call .. the call to Holiness, Ernie called it.

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**THE END**