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Call Of Love

By Mrs. Paul E. King

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"Laura Mae! Laura Mae!" With a start the petite figure on the bed stirred uneasily then tossed the bed covers aside and sat upright. She ran trembling fingers through her long dark brown hair as she eased her slight frame to the edge of the bed. Where had the voice come from? Who called her? Was someone in the room?



What was it that had awakened her?
Was someone in the house?

The latter question shook her. With sudden fright she walked across the room and stood in front of the window. The light from the street lamp outside filtered softly through the partially-opened slats of the venetian blinds, bathing her in diffused light, making her appear almost nebulous.

With heaving chest she breathed deeply then let the heavy intake of air out with sudden fierceness as she began a rhythmic pacing back and forth in the elaborately furnished suite of rooms. Again, from somewhere . . . (it was maddening!) came the voice, "Laura Mae! Laura Mae!"

With a dainty hand she grabbed an elegant robe from the plush overstuffed deep purple velvet boudoir chair near by the bed and donned it. Next she turned on a light. This allayed her fears slightly and partially.

A quick glance at the bedside table revealed a paperback edition of a low-type, sensuous love story. How shocked her mother would be should she walk into the room

and find such low-down trash and filth and garbage, she thought. The very thought filled the girl's heart with shame. She hurried to the table and with a single swoop of her hand she tossed it into the nearest waste basket. Then she sat down in the plush velvet chair to think.

What time was it, she wondered? And who had been calling her name? A quick glance at her wrist watch showed her the hour was a mere, two-twenty. She sat for a long time, thinking, then she decided she would go back to bed and sleep.

Checking the locks on the doors, she snapped the light off and slowly got back into bed. Sleep seemed impossible. She lay and watched the soft light from the street lamp outside as it filtered through the windows. She liked this. It filled her with a sweetly painful nostalgia. She was a girl again.., a pure, sweet, innocent girl living in the country with the saintliest parents God ever made. The street light became moonbeams that sifted through sheer ruffled curtains and danced across her happy, carefree face. Oh, she loved the nights when the moon shone silver and full through her windows and bathed her and the bedroom of her childhood in a shower of moonglow!

Sudden tears stung her eyes at the memory. She let them trickle down her face in a torrent of warm rain. She was not ashamed. There was no one to see her cry. How had she come to be a... a... The word was repelling and repulsive to her. She loathed her life of sin. Hated it! What of her child?

She sat quickly up in bed. How foolish she had been to think that she could ever forget. Forget that innocent little face? That soft baby cry when she put the basket on old Mrs. Carrington's door step, then knocked and waited in the shadows until the door opened and the basket with its precious contents was carried inside? Forget? **NEVER!**

She jumped out of bed and again began to pace the floor. She was losing her mind, she was sure. Memory was a dreadful thing when one had lived as she had. Conscience too! They whipped you, lashed and tormented you endlessly; pleaded, begged and seemed almost to scream for attention and action. "Oh, God!" she wailed into her hands.

God! Strange. She hadn't thought much about God for years. God! She stopped her pacing abruptly and stood in front of the window. Remorse filled her soul. Shame, too. She was a disgrace to her family. She, Laura Mae Stearns, had brought shame and dishonor upon the unspotted, clean, noble, Christian Stearns family. Why had she done it? **PRIDE!**

She moaned aloud as she thought of the train of events that led to her downfall but realized honestly that at the root of it all was her pride!

The night she was at the altar and came up to the light of having a clean and Holy heart, with a complete and total separation from the world and all things worldly, was the night she determined which way she would go. She remembered how she had set her jaw, hardened her heart and stiffened her neck until all the tears in the world couldn't move her. She had made up her mind; she would not be one of the old fashioned young people! She was pretty and she knew it! She was proud of it. She would exploit her beauty and have a good time.

She remembered, all too vividly and realistically now, of having left home and moving into a moderately-priced apartment in the city after she received her first pay check from Lawler's Firm. She felt totally grown-up and most self-sufficient; completely capable of taking care of herself. Her secretarial job was paying her big money. What's more, her boss to whom she was a private secretary, had told her she was the very girl for whom he had been searching for years..., beautiful, diminutive, petite, capable and efficient.

She had been flattered by his daffy attention to her and his profuse comments about her looks, her dress and her beautiful long hair had fed her ego and pride beyond any describing. She remembered (shamefaced now) how easily and shamelessly their secret love affair had come about. Both felt sure no one knew (no one suspicioned) what was going on between them. Strange, that she didn't remember about the All-Seeing Eye!

It was well concealed and covered up until, with a sudden jolt and utter dejection and depression, Laure Mae discovered that she was to become a mother. With the frightening realization that their "little" affair could no longer be kept secret, she became hysterical and nearly panicked.

"Why worry about something so small?" her employer-boss quipped when she informed him. "There are ways to remedy that..."

Laura Mae looked at him, wide-eyed with horror. Did his words portend what she thought they did, she wondered helplessly.

"I'll send you to a hospital in another city," he continued in a careless, apparently unconcerned manner. He spoke with as much ease as though he were merely giving her dictation to take down. She stared at him in shocked disbelief -- incredulity.

After awhile she spoke. Her voice came out in a small, unnatural way. "I will never consent to what you have in mind!" It was a positive statement, firmly made. "I am a wretched sinner, yes . . . like you," she continued, "and I have brought nothing but dishonor and disgrace upon one of the dearest and cleanest-living families on earth; but I refuse to be a murderer! This child did not ask to be born. Sin... your sin and mine... has caused this!"

"Sin!" he exclaimed sarcastically, laughing mockingly. "Sin! Forget the word. You are filled with needless inhibitions because of all that old fashioned teaching you've had. Times have changed. We're living in a different society: a permissive society. This is the age of the new morality! Anything goes in this generation."

"Perhaps for you it may; but for me, never! I... know better. No, I shall never be guilty of murder!" she said peremptorily.

"One thing is certain, Laura Mae, you can't keep the child and continue on in my employ!" It was an ultimatum.

Laura Mae remembered those days now . . . with remorse, deep hurt and constant guilt. At his insistence and with little or no alternative or recourse (because of pride), she was commanded to "give the child away" when once the specially hired and well-paid mid-wife had helped to deliver the tiny little girl.

She remembered that night (a dark night it had been..., in more than one way) when she wrapped the innocent, dark-haired, beautiful baby in warm blankets and laid her inside a basket and hurried out of the city to a small town close to her parents' home. The Carringtons had been family friends for years. Laura Mae knew the big, generous heart of Mrs. Carrington would open immediately in love to her child. The little girl would be well-cared for, loved and cuddled and coddled like a baby should be and she would be brought up in the same church in which she herself had been taught the right way but from which she had strayed. What's more, her father and mother would see the baby regularly in church.

That was two-and-one-half months ago, she reasoned suddenly, feeling again the soft baby cheek as she had kissed her good-bye before placing her on the doorstep and hearing the soft little baby sound she had made. She had nothing but sleepless nights and a haunted, taunted conscience since then. Over and over again and again that sweet little face appeared before her. The blue eyes seemed to be searching for her mother while two small, well-shaped beautiful baby arms kept reaching out in longing toward her. It was torment. Sheer torment. She couldn't go on like she was going much longer. It would drive her mad!

"Laura Mae! Laura Mae!" The voice was calling again, in pleading tones of love.

Miserable beyond words and sin-sick to the core, she dragged herself to the side of the bed where she dropped on her knees to the floor. All the sins of the past passed before her in grand and bold parade and were portrayed as clearly to her mind as if she were viewing them from a mammoth screen. "Oh, God! Oh, God!" she wailed forlornly. "Is there hope for me? Can You help the likes of me? Can You? Oh forgive me, I pray! Please forgive me! I'm sorry. Sorry!"

The city clock from a steeple nearby chimed out three chimes. Still she prayed. The devil had lied to her, deceived her; sin had marred and blackened her once-clean and pure life. It had blinded her. That which she had once thought fun and a good time had turned out to be bitterest woe and nothing short of torment, agony, and a gnawing, nagging conscience!

She wept and prayed well past the four-thirty hour, seeking salvation for her soul and the forgiveness of her many sins and somewhere past the hour of five the wayward prodigal and a merciful Saviour met. She was converted, forgiven! She felt the precious blood as it atoned for her every sin. For the first time in years she was truly happy. She began shouting for joy. It was a glorious way, this Christian way.

Afraid lest the old root of pride, which for the present lay dormant within her soul because of God's mighty saving power, should suddenly spring up and trouble her again, she began earnest seeking for sanctification, a pure and cleansed heart. She was willing to take the cross. No half-way business this time. Sin had dealt her a terrible blow because of her unwillingness to surrender in her early life. God wanted her all, or nothing. She would follow all the way.

With utter abandonment she yielded herself to Him in full surrender., to His will, His way and His desires and, in yielding and saying yes to everything and confessing the awfulness of the carnal traits within her heart, the sweet Holy Spirit took full and complete charge and control of her heart. It was heaven! Never had she experienced anything like the soul-cleansing fire of the Holy Ghost burning out all the carnal nature! She was clean! Her soul found its rest. Great billows of Divine love rolled over her in wave after glorious wave of blessing.

She was totally oblivious of time, so blest was she and thrilled with His presence. When finally she looked at the clock on the wall she was surprised to note the hands telling her it was seven-twenty. She made a quick decision.

She dressed excitedly; not in one of the many worldly creations hanging in her wardrobe, ah, no. Rather, she chose a modest, simple little dress then arranged her long, dark hair in a neat way up on her head. She was thankful that she had never had her hair cut. It was more beautiful than when she left home even.

The modest looking dress and neatly arranged hair gave her a wonderful feeling of womanliness. She tingled with excitement, knowing she was now the woman God had planned for her to be. With the new-found peace and joy came a fierce desire and yearning to be, not a private secretary to some ungodly worldly-wise man but a "keeper at home" -- a mother to her abandoned darling, wherever she was. This was her God-ordered position! She meant to search until she found the little girl. Then she would try, though she didn't deserve the child, to make amends to her for her past.

It was almost dinner-time when she pulled into the driveway of the country home. Wasting no time in getting out of the car, she literally ran down the garden path to the kitchen door. Shep bounded off the porch to meet her. She patted his furry head lightly then turned the knob on the door.

"Mother! Mother!" she called, weeping softly and saying the name in a benedictory way as she stepped inside and flung herself into the open arms. "I've come home! I'm tired of living the old kind of life. I'm new in Christ!"

"Thank God!" was all the happy woman could say. "Father and I knew you'd be back, Laura Mae. We knew it."

Cradled tenderly in the strong mother arms, Laura Mae related, with a glowing heart and a burning testimony, her new life in Christ. "And oh, Mother, Holiness of heart is wonderful! I never knew one could have such marvelous soul-rest and peace. My heart is cleansed from all inbred sin. I was so blind, but thank God, I see. Bless His dear name!"

Weeping brokenly, she told her mother of her sinful past, asking forgiveness for the heartache and heart-break she had brought into the home. "And to think it all happened," she said, "because I failed to go on into Holiness. Because I refused to get sanctified wholly. Pride... I was so full of it . . . took me on the toboggan slide downward. But I'm changed, Mother . . ."

"Yes. Yes, dear daughter," the mother crooned softly. "You are changed; and it all happened this morning. -- I know all about it . . . I prayed through for you. I kept calling your name out to my dear heavenly Father and He heard my cry and answered."

Suddenly, Laura Mae knew! It was her mother who was calling her name . . . whose calling had wakened her out of a sound sleep -- it was a call of love! A call of intercessory love! How far-reaching was a Christian mother's love!

As she wept unashamed on her mother's shoulder a soft baby cry reached her ears. She would recognize that cry anywhere! "Mother! Mother!" she exclaimed, hurrying toward the room from whence came the cry. "It's Laurie! She's here! She's here!" In an overwhelming surge of love and joy she swept the baby into her arms and fondled her closely to her heaving bosom. "Laurie! Laurie! My baby!" She cried. "Oh, Laurie! My darling! I've found you. Found you!"

She wept brokenly, the tears falling warmly, profusely on to the innocent little baby face, upturned and startled. "Forgive your mother, Laurie. Forgive me for what I did." Laura Mae begged, kissing the child hungrily but tenderly. "I'm changed, Laurie. Jesus Christ changed me completely. I'm a new person. Why, Laurie, you have a new mother! I love you!"

Suddenly aware that her father and mother were both in the room, she asked softly, "How . . .? I mean, where . . .?"

The happy parents explained it simply. "Louise Carrington and a girl friend of hers were sitting on the swing in the garden when you delivered Laurie at the Carrington door. They watched you without your knowledge that any one was around. Louise said she saw you hold the baby close to your heart and kiss her tearfully before knocking on the door."

The memory of it all was too painful for Laura Mae. "Oh, I did! I did!" she sobbed. "I wanted to keep her. I loved her dearly and I still do."

The big round, blue eyes looked brightly into the face of the weeping woman then, smiling suddenly up at her, Laurie's crying ceased. She relaxed and was soon sleeping soundly, cradled in the loving arms of her mother.

Mrs. Stearns was speaking again. "Mrs. Carrington thought we should know that it was your child who was left on their doorstep, and if we wanted her, she felt we should have her. If not, they wanted Laurie. She has been such a joy to our hearts, Laura Mae."

"Oh, Mother, father! I had no idea how far down one could go when he disobeys God and fails to go on into Holiness! I would never have believed that sin could drag me to the level it did. How very, very deceitful is the unsanctified heart! But that's all changed now. I have a new life ahead of me.

"I shall have to bear the reproach of my sin to my dying day, no doubt, but sadder still is the fact that my innocent little daughter must suffer the stigma of my sin. Sin pays in cold cash. Hard cash. Its wages are costly while living and after that it's death! I'm sorry I didn't count the cost that night at the altar and pay the full price!"

"The Apostle Paul speaks of 'forgetting those things which are behind,' Laura Mae," Mrs. Stearns said brokenly. "Your past can never be undone; but the future stretches before you in a new way; a challenging way and gloriously bright with promise, my dear, dear daughter."

"And thank God, by His grace it shall be just that . . . bright and glorious. New, all new, in Christ!" Laura Mae whispered.

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THE END