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He Shall Live Again

By Mrs. Paul E. King

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Louise pulled the gate shut behind her, hoping her agitation hadn't shown too greatly as she ordered the strangers in the car off her property. Couldn't they read the NO TRESPASSING sign, she wondered. She couldn't stand the sight of people!

Her slender frame trembled slightly as she made her way inside and sat down in the nearest chair. Stubborn persistent tears threatened to come, to erupt, but she pushed them aside just as stubbornly and did her best to force them back.

She almost reproached herself for having ordered the people in this last car off her property but she soon erased any trace of softness and tenderness that might spring up within her now embittered soul with the thought that she [should] not start allowing one person on her land to get to the lake which lay just beyond her home, looking for all the world like a piece of deep blue sky fallen from above and spreading itself like an enormous piece of blue gauze at the bottom of the hill in back of her comfortable home.

To erase the unpleasant feeling within her, she walked through the back door to the garden that lay just outside. Spring was peeking up and out everywhere. She saw it in the hundreds of crocuses that paraded gallantly, beautifully, across the yard in their gay, bright new dresses; in the long, lithe and slender, yellow-green willow withes that swayed and danced ever so gracefully to the gentle sighings of the spring breezes and



“Excuse me for crying,” she said, “I love little boys very much.”

she heard its merry young voice, too, in the murmur of the laughing brook that ran by the house in a playful, carefree way and emptied into the lake beyond.

She could have fresh trout for breakfast every morning if she took the time to do a bit of fly fishing, but she chose not to -- too many memories were connected with the brook -- the lake -- with everything, really!

She knelt on the ground to dig around one of the many perennial plants she had when she saw the Easter lilies. They were up! -- all eight of them! She let out a loud gasp and her hand flew to her heart. Through misty eyes she stared at them. Was this a token for good for her, she wondered. Why hadn't they come up last spring? In a kind of dazed awe and wonder, she reached a trembling hand forward and lightly touched one of the lilies.

For a long moment, huddled there on the ground in front of the lilies, she let memories wash over her. She had kept them out of sight, locked fast behind a secret door in her heart, rarely letting even the picture of Jack and Todd's face come before the eyes of her mind. But now, with the lilies standing before her -- all eight of them -- she opened that secret door, and memories flowed around her.

The sun-drenched morning when she and Todd had planted the lilies was a perfect morning. A perfect start to what should have been a perfect day. Todd had prattled on endlessly, idly, as he helped her cover the crude looking bulbs with dirt.

"Will they grow, Mommie?" he had asked, child-like. "Honestly and truly grow? -- these funny looking bulbs?"

And she had pulled him to her and kissed his tiny button of a nose as she answered, "Of course they'll grow, Todd dearest, God will see to it that they grow. You and I have done all we can: the rest is up to God!"

"I can hardly wait to see them, Mommie! Eight lilies! One for every birthday I've had!"

How excited he had been over the prospect of seeing his lilies grow and bloom. Every day for four days after he had helped her plant them, he had gone outside to see them, he had gone outside to see if the lilies were up and sprouting green yet. And then on the afternoon of that fourth day, it had happened.

Jack and Todd had started to town., the hardware store really . . . after some small part for the garden plow. At the last bend along the winding black-top road before coming out onto the main highway leading to town, a young man under the influence of liquor met Jack and Todd on their side of the curve and sent both her husband and only child into eternity.

It was such a shock -- such a loss. One minute to have Jack and Todd hold her close to them, kissing her good-bye until they should return from the store, and less than ten minutes later to have lost both of them . . . DEAD!

Slowly, insidiously really, bitterness crept into her unsanctified heart and she found it easy to blame God for having taken the two dearest persons on earth away from her.

For more than two years now she lived the life of a recluse. Fencing herself in an unreal world of her own making, she refused to attend church..., ever..., and only went to town when it was absolutely necessary. Her friends and loved ones were no longer welcome at her door and the house that one time rang with laughter and kind words became suddenly still and silent, empty, dull and lonely.

Looking at the lilies now and recalling what she had told Todd about them living..., being resurrected, she had told him, adding the story of Christ's death and resurrection, she sobbed convulsively. She realized suddenly that unless she repented and sought forgiveness from God she would never, never see either her husband nor her son; whom she knew without a doubt were both in heaven. Jack had always lived a sweet, consistent, sanctified life before her in every way . . . every day of their thirteen years of happy married life.

Louise realized that, unlike Jack's clean and pure heart, hers had been filled with bitterness and hatred.

She buried her face in the earth and let all the bitterness of her soul wash out and away with the fast flowing tears and her agonizing pleas to God for mercy on her soul.

The words of the minister who had preached Jack and Todd's funeral echoed deep inside her as a reminder of his message, "If a man die shall he live again?" Rev. Norton quoted, ere he launched into the wonderful message of hope for the Christian.

Just like the lilies, dead and lifeless it seemed for more than two years, which had suddenly sprung up stout and strong, and green with life running through every vein and fiber of them, so Jack and Todd were living. Jesus said, "Because I live ye shall live also!" Jack and Todd had been living all this time and she . . . she had been dead! Dead and lost -- and bitter.

She lost all trace of time as she prayed and when at last she arose to her feet with the light of heaven shining on her countenance she was amazed and astonished at the beauty all around her. It looked new, the world -- all of it. Realizing that the transformation had taken place within her heart, she let out a loud shout of thanks to the Lord ere hurrying inside.

She had just finished washing her face and set about putting a cold washcloth on her swollen eyes to soothe them when the door chimes rang musically through the house.

Wondering who it was this time, she hurried to the door and saw a small boy standing in front of her.

"Excuse me, ma'am," he said politely, Smiling from ear to ear it seemed to Louise. The boy was irresistible, she thought and a sudden urge to press him to her heart almost overpowered her. She controlled herself as he spoke on. "Father was wondering if you knew Who owned the lake back there." He pointed a finger toward the lake then added by way of explanation for his father, "Daddy's coming. See? Do the people who own the lake allow anyone to fish in it?"

Louise smiled down at the boy. He couldn't be over eight years old, she knew. "Where is your father?" she asked in a dazed kind of way.

The boy pointed down the hill toward a handsome young man not much older than herself. He was walking bravely . . . but with a limp. "That's father!" he exclaimed proudly. "He's a wonderful father!"

Without warning, tears came into Louise's eyes. "Excuse me, my dear," she exclaimed, reaching hungry arms outward toward the winsome lad., so like her Todd. "I love little boys very, very much." she said tearfully. "Especially when they're about eight years old!"

"That's exactly how old I am!" the boy exclaimed with pride.

"Won't you come inside?" Louise asked kindly. "Would you like a glass of lemonade or some milk maybe?"

"Thank you, Ma'am. I'd better wait for father. We wanted to go fishing together, but when we saw the NO TRESPASSING sign father said we'd better find out who owned the lake and see if they'd give us permission to fish or not. We're Christians and obey the laws of the land as well as the laws of God."

Louise felt suddenly how very selfish and small she had been. She noted with keen interest the remarkable intelligence and politeness of this lad before her. He was well trained and well versed in so many things and so many ways. She must find some way to know him better.

"I made it, Thad!" a strong, deep-voice said as he topped the hill at last. Seeing Louise, he blushed hotly. "Sorry, Ma'am. I hope we're not bothering you," he said softly.

"Not at all. I'm glad you've come," Louise found herself saying with enthusiasm, feeling suddenly like she would burst if she couldn't testify to someone, tell them how Christ had forgiven her. Saved her. "I'm Louise Ramon and I own the lake and the land

you're looking at," she said. "But won't you sit for awhile on the porch swing while I fix us some lemonade and cookies. I didn't realize how thirsty and hungry I was until just now!"

"Thanks," the man said, grateful to rest awhile. "I'm Dwight Farris and this is my son Thad."

"Welcome to my door," Louise said pleasantly, disappearing inside.

In a little while she was back with a pitcher of frosty lemonade and a plate of home-made cookies. "Eat heartily," she said. "It's a kind of celebration."

"A celebration?" Thad said, smiling sweetly but wearing a puzzled kind of expression on his dear face.

Louise smiled too. She felt suddenly young again. Maybe it's because Thad sat on her swing and smiled at her. But thirty-four wasn't old. Not at all. She had made herself seem old by her pining -- her bitterness. Now, that was all changed -- all forgiven. "Yes, Thad and Mr. Farris," she said, "this is a celebration and you've come just in time to be a part of it. Perhaps you may never understand but I'd like to testify. For more than two years I've been a much embittered woman, hating God and blaming Him so unjustly for something He didn't do." Starting at the very beginning, she told the entire story, of Jack and Todd's death and of the bitterness she had allowed to seep into her soul. "Just before Thad arrived," she added, "I prayed through and got converted. I'm a Christian now and I mean by the grace of God to seek after a clean and pure heart like Jack had. It took him to heaven and kept him sweet and holy under every circumstance of life while here and I want it, too. Oh, I'm so happy in Jesus today!"

When she had finished and looked at him, Dwight Farris was weeping for joy. "Praise the Lord!" he said joyfully. "We both speak the same language. I suppose each of us has some valley to pass through -- some mountain to climb and tunnel through and some dark river to cross, but God's grace is sufficient for every trial and for every crisis . . ."

Thad spoke softly then to his father. Kindly. "We'll meet her again, dearest father. We must not cry," he reminded, swallowing hard and crying. "Just before she died, Mommie told us not to cry; but to rejoice with her that her pain and suffering were almost over and that she was going home to be with Jesus. And we're going to her!," he exclaimed brightly, looking earnestly at Louise.

"Yes, my son! Oh, yes. When God calls us we shall go to join mother." Dwight Farris spoke to the boy as if they two were alone on the porch. Louise, her face ashen white, felt almost like an eavesdropper in this holy and sacred conversation between father and son.

Noticing the fair and lovely face before him turned suddenly unbelievably white and pale, Dwight apologized. "Forgive us," he pleaded. "I had no intention of grieving you further. You have pain and heartaches enough of your own."

"Perhaps . . . God willed it so."

"Wh what do you mean?"

"It has helped me to talk about it. Then too, sharing your grief and sorrow has made my own seem lighter. My son was the exact age of Thad when he was killed."

Dwight gasped and Thad looked like he would cry. Instead, he asked suddenly, brightly, "You... you live alone here?" Shyly, he voiced the yearning and longing of his heart, "I . . . I wish I had a Mommie like you since my Mother can't come back to us!"

Louise hung her head, conscious of the color that was flowing into her cheeks. Dwight smiled pleasantly. It was a pleased smile... one that meant something. A bright, far away look came into Thad's eyes. "Your daddy and your little boy and my mother have met then!" he exclaimed. "And I know Mother... she's loving your little boy for you until you get Home!"

The sudden change of conversation by Thad eased some of the embarrassment between the adults and Louise, turning and facing him and pulling him gently to her said, "Say, my little man, you wanted to go fishing, didn't you? The lake's just beyond the yard fence. Take the path down to it but do be careful that you don't fall in. If you know how to fly fish you can catch a world of fish in the brook that runs alongside of the house, Thad. I'd feel better and more relaxed knowing you were fishing from the stream."

She felt suddenly ashamed of herself. She sounded just like the boy's mother. Dwight beamed upon her with a look that sent happy little chills racing through her.

Thad was away in a flash, calling his thanks over his shoulder. Dwight lingered behind. "I'll never be able to thank you enough for this," he said. "I try to fill both a mother's and father's place in Thad's heart and life. It's a bit difficult to do sometimes. With this leg like it is," he slapped the leg that limped a sound crack, "well, there are many things I can't do with the boy. Running after a ball, for instance. But I'm not complaining. God forbid. I got the leg injured in war." Then, smiling, his handsome face lighted up all over as he continued, "Next to going to church, Thad loves fishing most of all. We love the outdoors and this morning before starting out we asked God to direct our feet to the right spot. The perfect spot -- and it looks like He's done more than what we've asked for even. He led us to you!" He smiled into her eyes as he said it.

She found herself blushing again; and the little thrills of excitement raced through her as he said, "Perhaps we could see more of you, Thad and I? It seems as if God led us together ..."

"You're welcome here anytime," Louise said softly, avoiding his eyes.

She watched him from the kitchen window as he made his way along the path toward the lake. The warm spring breeze teased his thick set of auburn hair mercilessly. Half-way down to the lake he paused, turned, and looked back. A smile wreathed his face. She stood farther back from the window lest he see what she felt and hear the happy song that kept replaying itself in her heart.

Sometime in the future, she was sure, she would stand by this same kitchen window and watch those two as they walked leisurely to the lake. With the love of both wife and mother, she would wave to them and have dinner ready and waiting for them when they came "home."

Eight lilies were growing outside the back door.., one for each of Todd's birthdays. Thad would rejoice in knowing there were eight!

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THE END