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The Forbidden

By Mrs. Paul E. King

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The evening was sultry and humid, a prologue to summer storms, as Marilyn Etters walked blithely down Pineknot Street. Stacy Thorn wanted to see her -- said for her to be there by eight.

Marilyn's spirits rose; hope soared high: perhaps this would be the day . . . the time . . . when Stacy would get saved and give her heart to the Lord. For three years she had witnessed to Stacy and her many friends about the glorious, transforming power of Jesus Christ, and now . . . now!



She walked blithely down Pineknot Street.

Marilyn prayed silently and earnestly as she quickened her footsteps. She must not keep Stacy waiting, she deeded. A verbal testimony needed a consistent Christian life to back it up, and since she had promised Stacy that she would be there by eight, she meant to keep her word.

The beautiful, sprawling two-story house soon came into full view, and for all her longing and eager desire to win Stacy to Jesus, Marilyn felt suddenly scared. Bowing her head, she prayed for help, wisdom and power that she might say only the right words . . . fitting words.

She stepped lightly up to the circular parquet that led to the heavy, ornamental door and pushed the door chimes. Scarcely had they sounded before the door opened

and an excited Stacy bubbled pleasantly, "Oh, you're here! I'm so happy, Marilyn. Come inside. The gang's all here."

Gang? Marilyn swallowed; her throat felt suddenly parched and dry. Gang! What was Stacy doing? she wondered. Why a gang?

"I have a surprise waiting for you, Marilyn, a real surprise! But first, come with me upstairs. I want to show you the new dress Mother bought me today before leaving."

"Leaving? Isn't your mother . . ."

But Marilyn never finished her second question; Stacy said quickly, "You won't approve of the dress, I'm sure, but I love it, and I wanted to share my joy over its beauty with someone else. Come, follow me."

What a strange, peculiar girl, Marilyn thought as she followed her friend up the plush, eggshell colored, thickly-carpeted, wide, circular stairway to Stacy's enormous and beautiful bedroom.

Hurrying to the mammoth walk-in closet, Stacy, lifted the dress off the rod and, putting it up to her slender form, she said, "Isn't it absolutely dreamy! Mother has got to have the best taste in all the world of selecting clothing for me. Just look at this, Marilyn! O I love it! I love it! I can just see Wally dancing with me!"

Marilyn gasped. "You . . . you . . . Oh Stacy, I wouldn't . . ."

With a gay gesture of the hand, Stacy said lightly, "I guess we all have our likes and dislikes. But I love the dress."

"But . . . the neck-line, Stacy! It . . . it's . . . naked. Aren't you embarrassed to . . . to . . . be so exposed? And there's not any semblance of a sleeve even."

Laughing lightly, Stacy said, "Oh, Marilyn, who needs sleeves anyhow! The spaghetti straps hold the dress on my shoulders. You're a dear, sweet, innocent old-fashioned girl, and tonight I'm going to show you what you've been missing all these years. You're much too young and pretty to take religion so seriously. I told Mother what you've been tolling me and she said for me to enjoy my youth while I can, that the pressures and burdens of life will come upon me all too quickly as it is. But come, they're waiting for us in the rec-room down in the basement."

"Look, Stacy, I . . . I think I'll go home. If I can't help you, I guess there's no need for my being here. As to 'the gang' -- whomever that is -- well . . ."

"Oh, but you may be able to help some of the kids, Marilyn. Come." And Stacy tripped lightly down the stairs with Marilyn following and praying for guidance as she went.

A loud clap of thunder caused Marilyn to look through the window as she stepped down the last step. It was black out, an eerie, ominous kind of blackness. Lightning now joined the thunder. How quickly the storm came up, Marilyn thought.

"Looks more like midnight than eight-thirty-five," Stacy asserted, glancing quickly through the window. "But we'll not hear the storm in the basement. So 'let it rain, let it rain, let it pour,'" she sang gaily.

One more thunderous clap and the sky opened up. Oh, if only she had heeded the early afternoon weather forecast, Marilyn mused silently. She should have brought her rain coat. Well, one thing was certain -- she couldn't go home in this downpour.

Raucous laughter and deafening music greeted them as they entered the basement rec-room. Stacy was right, the sound of thunder could not be heard, and Marilyn doubted that even a howling, screaming, screeching tornado or hurricane could be heard above the fury and the volume of the music, so called. And the beat!

Marilyn felt sick at heart. This was no place for her to be. She started backing up the stairs.

"Hold it! Hold it!" Stacy shouted, hurrying to the center of the enormous, dimly-fit, beautifully-carpeted room and waving her arms for attention.

One of the fellows ran to the stereo and turned the volume down. "What's the matter with you, Stacy?" he asked impatiently. "What do you want?"

"Exactly what you did, Neal -- the volume turned down."

"But my dear girl," he exclaimed quickly, "we can't hear!"

"That's quite all right. We have someone new here tonight and she's not ready for the heavy stuff yet. Marilyn," Stacy said, leading her to the center of the room, "meet the gang: Neal Osman at the stereo, Jan Epperson beside him, Darla Hill on the big bright floor pillow, Leo Krump to her right . . .

On and on the introductions went. Marilyn was glad when the lengthy ordeal was over. Not that she didn't enjoy making new friends -- she did. But her inmost being told her these were not the kind of friends a Christian could pal around with. Oh, if only she would be able to help even one of them!

Hurrying to the light switch, Stacy turned the lights down another notch, plunging the room into even greater dimness. "OK, gang," she ordered, "to the table and the boards. I have three of them, you'll notice," she added. "This is new to Marilyn, but I'm sure she'll enjoy it as much as we do when she gets the drift of it."

"Stacy," Marilyn said quickly, "I won't be participating -- whatever it is. I'm sure it's something displeasing to God; so count me out."

For answer, Stacy countered seriously, "Poof! There's not a thing wrong with this. The Ouija board's quite harmless, believe me. I certainly wouldn't involve you in anything which I feel would be a violation of your conscience or your religious convictions and beliefs. I admire you for your stand, as well as for the beautifully-consistent life you live. But this is fun. See? The board gives us answers to our questions. Watch." And Stacy asked a question. Slowly the planchette moved across the board, pointing to various letters of the alphabet, spelling out an answer to Stacy's question. "See what I mean!" the girl exclaimed excitedly.

"It . . . it's demon power!" Marilyn stated emphatically, heading for the stairs.

"Please Marilyn, don't go!" Stacy begged. "Hey, Stacy," Bill Olgen called from the far end of the table, "I saw that new fortune teller yesterday. She's fantastic! First, she looked at my face and into my eyes for a long time; then she took my hand and read the fines in my palm."

"Was it good or bad?" Sylvia Crane asked.

"Both, Syl. Part of it's secret; so I'll keep that to myself. For the most part, it was good. She did say, however, that our family would experience a traumatic experience sometime late this year or early next year."

"Doesn't that bother you?" Fran Cope asked.

"Why didn't she tell you what kind of traumatic experience it would be? Didn't you ask?"

"Of course not. Who wants to know that sort of thing? Why get gray hairs before one's time!"

"Well, I know one person who would have asked -- Me! I just found out from Madam Tsing that one of the members in our family is going to have serious surgery sometime in November."

"What if it's you?" Stacy said quickly.

"It could be," Fran admitted. "I asked her; but she said it was best that I not know which member of the family it will be."

"Have you told your mother, Fran?" Brooke George questioned.

"Oh my no! You know how Mom feels about such things, Brooke."

"Do I ever! Mine's the same way. She says anybody who fools around with fortune tellers or tea readers, and messes with horoscope and such like, is in for serious trouble. So, naturally, I sneak around and do it. I went to Madam Tsing near the end of the year to see if I'd pass my final exams. She told me I would -- 'with flying colors.' Maybe I was minus those 'flying colors,' but at least I passed."

"Hey, how about cutting the chatter," Neal shouted. "Let's get down to business with the boards before Mr. Blackman gets here."

"That's what I say," Leo ejaculated. "Tonight Darla will witness her first seance, when Mr. Blackman arrives, and I . . ."

"Stacy," Marilyn broke in upon the sentence. "I don't wish to sound rude, but I'm leaving."

"Marilyn, please. Please! You'll like Mr. Blackman, and the night's all our; Mother and Father left for the night. Said I could have a slumber party here or anything I wanted to have."

"Thanks, Stacy. I'm leaving. You perhaps are not aware of what you're doing, but believe me when I say that you're openly inviting demons and evil spirits into your heart."

"Who says so!" Jan exclaimed, getting to her feet.

"The Bible forbids what is going on here," Marilyn said, speaking positively and boldly. She was amazed at the strength she felt coming from God. "Deuteronomy 18:10-12 says, 'There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch.

"Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.

"For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee.'

"O Stacy, please, please don't proceed with this . . . this exceeding wickedness! It's an abomination to God, and Revelation 21:8 says that 'the fearful . . . and the abominable, and the murderers, . . . and sorcerers, . . . and all liars, shall have their part

in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.' Please, Stacy, for your soul's sake, don't do this!"

"Look, lily white," Wally said sarcastically, "if you don't want to participate, go home. This is our way of life and no one's going to change us!"

"I . . . pray that God will have mercy on your souls," Marilyn said kindly -- softly. "Jesus offers His gifts of salvation to each of you and . . ."

"Cut the preaching bit!" Wally shouted angrily.

Turning, Marilyn hurried up the steps and out the door.

The rain was coming down in sheets; so she huddled against one of the impressive-looking columns supporting an upstairs verandah and waited until the storm blew itself out. Then she started homeward.

The air felt cool and delightful now, and the earth smelled deliciously clean. Marilyn inhaled great, deep draughts of its freshness, her heart a deep well of thankfulness to God for leading her into the path of holiness and righteousness.

Recalling the scene in Stacy's basement rec-room, she shivered. Demons were present; she felt them. It was a terrifying, frightening feeling.

A verse of Scripture came to her then: "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world" (John 4:4).

With a thankful and happy heart, she hurried home.

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THE END