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## Entrance Of Thy Word

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The highway buzzed and hummed with the sound of speeding cars as Shanda Frackle made her way through the crowded parking lot toward the main entranceway of the sprawling mall. Her slipper-thongs made a slapping, cracking noise with every step she took, much like the throbbing, crashing spurts of rebellion in her heart, she thought, relishing the firm, militant sound of the unsightly looking thongs.

"Freaked out," her mother had said icily of her new dress code, which was not a dress code at all but was merely anything that would make her look more tacky and more out of touch with the "establishment" than before.



Glancing quickly at her dirty, unwashed feet and the sloppy thongs made from an old, discarded rubber tire and given to her by a friend of equal rebellion and hatred, Shanda laughed out loud. She was a Frackle perhaps, but in name only; inside, she was another person -- a person carving out a world of her own according to her liking and desire; in time she would forget the name Frackle even. Presently, she would have to keep it and use it... for money's sake only.

Stepping inside the spacious mall, Shanda made her way toward a section where tall trees grew like an umbrella over a spewing, spraying fountain. There, in a secluded corner, she sat on a bench, planning her next move. To get work, she would have to change her manner of dress, she knew . . . a thing she would not do, she decided; but,

unless she did get a job and pay for her share of room and board, the "gang" would put her out of the house.

Dropping her face into the palms of her hands, she thought of her father and mother. Perhaps . . . just one more time.., she could work on their sympathy and squeeze a few hundred dollars out of their abundant bank account; that would more than pay for room and board for the next month or two. But what strategy would she use this time? They were adamant to her old line of not being able to find work, especially after her father had offered her a job as a secretary in his firm.

Thrusting her hand into the frayed pocket of her too-large, faded blue jacket, her fingers touched a single coin -- her last until she secured a job or could play on her parents' sympathy again her next visit home.

Jumping to her feet, she decided upon the latter alternative.

"Excuse me, Miss," a pleasant voice said close to her ear. "I have a gift for you. Please accept it in the spirit by which it is given . . . in the name of Jesus. And always remember that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. Here, my dear. God bless you."

It all happened so quickly . . . the soft-spoken words and the gift of a small book, transferred from the stranger's hands to her own.., that Shanda had neither the time to accept or reject the gift. When her startled amazement subsided, she realized she was the possessor of a small book. There it lay, in the palm of her hand, inviting and beckoning her to search its contents.

"A gift," the young girl had said. "A gift." For her! That was more than the gang had ever done for her, she soliloquized in pensive thought.

Almost hugging it to her, and scarcely realizing what she was doing or why she was doing it, she sat down upon the bench again and opened the book. A Bible. Yes, without a doubt, this was a Bible!

In anger and disgust she threw it on the tiled floor, ready to stomp it to pieces had someone else not entered her small sanctuary just then and seated himself near her.

Embarrassed, she scooped the Bible from the floor, thrust it into her jacket pocket, and hurried away without so much as a backward look.

Walking to the far end of the mall, she found another grouping of seats. The traffic of hurrying feet was lighter here and, since the setting was not nearly so inviting and beautiful as it was near the spraying fountain, she was more sure of her privacy. Mainly, the people who seated themselves here would be those with tired feet, seeking a brief respite from the hard marble floor over which they were walking, she was sure.

Squeezing her slight body against the back of the bench, she became suddenly aware of the fact that her hand was pressed tightly over the Bible which she had scooped up so carelessly and in such haste only minutes ago lest the stranger see what she intended to do. Now, her anger abated by the brisk walk down the mall, she removed the Book from her oversize pocket and let it fall open at random.

The words which she read seemed to mesmerize her: "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." (Psalm 119:59)

"Thought on my ways! Turned my feet unto thy testimonies," she mused in silent wonder, gazing at the floor and at her dirty feet.

For the first time in weeks Shanda felt embarrassment over her filth, her feet especially. Whatever was happening to her? she wondered with fear, feeling suddenly very strange.

With her hand holding the Book, she closed her eyes. How many, many times she had "thought" about her ways, wondering what ultimately would happen when she died. Where would she go?

The deep, abiding, ever-constant conviction that this life was but the beginning of her immortality entered constantly into her thoughts. Wasn't this a big factor in changing her life style! She was searching for something to satisfy. In the depths of her soul was the persistent, insistent conviction that "there is something within us that can be without us and will be after us."

Unbidden tears stung her eyes and trickled down her cheeks. Brushing them away, she read on and on, pausing long in deep meditation over verse after amazing verse. Here was a Book that knew everything about her -- how she lived and how she thought, her anxieties and her questions.

"The entrance of thy words giveth fight; it giveth understanding to the simple," she had read. Yes, that's what it said: "The entrance of thy word . . ." Suddenly, Shanda knew that she had found the way out of her darkness and the answer to her maze of muddled, distorted and troubled thoughts. It was through the "entrance" of God's Words.

Longing desperately to be made clean, from the inside out, she bowed her head. "God," she cried, "this is all so new and strange to me, but if You care about me, help me. Please! I feel filthy, God, all dirty and filthy inside of me. And she, the girl said.., the girl who gave me this Book... that the blood of Jesus Christ cleansed from all sin. Oh, I need this cleansing; I want it..."

A peace heretofore alien to her being now filled her heart.

Shanda, feeling happier and lighter than she had ever felt, sobbed for pure joy. At last., at long last. ... she found what she had been searching for all her life. It came through the entrance of His Words, through His Presence.

Seeing the sloppy looking thongs, her dirty feet and unkempt person, Shanda got to her feet and hurried to the parking lot and the sports car her father had bought for her when she graduated from high school, her mind made up that she would never again go back to the gang.

With clear direction and bubbling over with joy, she started for home. A good shampoo and hot bath, plus decent, sensible, feminine clothing would adorn her exterior and exemplify the beautiful interior change of her heart, she thought happily, stripping the rubber thongs off her feet as a token that she had broken with the old life forever.

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THE END