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A Good Name

By Mrs. Paul E. King

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Shirley Channing walked away from the small house which she shared with her widowed mother and headed straight-course for the beach which spread itself in such vastness and whiteness as to mystify her at times. It was peacefully-quiet as she walked, much to her profound joy and delight. This afforded her an excellent opportunity for meditation and for pondering over the many chapters of Scripture which she read each morning before taking her customary brisk morning walk.

Her loafers, slipping and sliding in the myriad tiny granules of sand, made walking difficult and a bit tedious at times, but it was worth every effort expended, she thought, her eyes looking at the endless body of blue-green water, a thing of beauty and mystery indeed.



She stood for a while now, watching the white-capped waves rushing like unbridled steeds with frosty-white, wind-ruffled manes toward the shore, their fury spent, finally, with a thunderous roar and a collapsing onto the beautiful white sand in an expression of total exhaustion.

"Proud waves" God had labeled them, in Job 38:11. "Proud waves" whose bounds and boundaries were placed by a single command from His lips: "Hitherto shalt thou come; but no further."

"What a great and Almighty God Thou art!" Shirley exclaimed aloud into the brisk sea air, wondering what would have happened had God not set the bounds. The earth would no doubt have all been sea.., all water.

But God/ she meditated silently, recounting numerous other times . . . times in her own life . . . when God had taken a hand and intervened in matters which seemed completely out of hand and out of bounds -- problems which seemed to have no solution -- blind, dead-end streets which presented no way out. But God, she thought again, joyously. Yes, God. He had been close by all the time, waiting, waiting until she reached her extreme end and could "be still" long enough and know that He was God. Little wonder the song-writer penned those beautiful lines: "Trusting as the moments fly; trusting as the day goes by. Trusting Him what e'er befall . . . Trusting Jesus that is all." This was all one needed, she mused.

Sensing the presence of her Shepherd-Guide, Shirley started her walk along the beach.

Save for the crashing of the waves and the roaring of the sea, all else was peacefully-quiet. The girl paused every now and then to pick up some unusually lovely sea shell which lay in her pathway, washed up from the ocean's floor and brought in by the tide. Her mother and she made numerous and various objects of art and many knick-knacks which a local gift and hobby shop sold for them . . . an additional amount of money coming into the small home as a supplement to the monthly check her mother received since her father's decease.

"So this is the way you spend your early morning hours!"

The voice startled Shirley. Turning quickly, she saw Tim Sharpe.

"Tim!" she exclaimed. "You frightened me. Terribly! Where did you come from? I thought you were working out of town. Your last letter said you were," she added quickly.

"I was, but I'm not."

"What do you mean by that?" Shirley quickly, looking at her friend. "You didn't get fired?" she probed.

Tim laughed heartily. "Of course not, Shirl; I quit."

Shirley's face wore a puzzled frown now. "But ... but I thought you said.., well, you did write that you had a wonderful job. You even told me you loved your work. What happened, Tim? Out with it!" she exclaimed softly, alarm registering in her eyes.

"Nothing happened, Shirl, believe me. It's just that I got lonely for you. So I told the boss I was quitting and coming home."

"Just like that?"

"Just like that; parroting your question with the answer. Oh, Shirley, it's so good to see you and to be with you again! And fancy meeting you here all by yourself.., alone! Let's walk to The Point so we can really be alone."

Shirley gasped. "Whatever has happened to you, Tim? Of course I won't go to The Point with you this hour of the morning. You shock me by asking. I never go to The Point; you know that."

"But why not? And why should you be shocked? I mean, well, I'm sure you know how I have always felt about you. You know this, Shirley; I haven't tried to keep it from you."

With open candor, Shirley Said, "But I have never told you anything to give you reason for feeling this way, Tim. You know I haven't. We've been good friends, yes; but beyond that, well . . . And then to think that you would insult me by suggesting such a . . . a... bad-name place as The Point!"

"Just some old fogey's idea!" he retorted. "It's a lover's hang-out, that's all."

"That's all! Oh, Tim, what has happened to you? You didn't use to be this way. No, no, no! There's no way I'll go there . . . nor anywhere with you. I value my reputation too much to have my name dragged in the mud by going to questionable places"

"Times have changed, Shirley! Things are different than they used to be. Get with it, girl; you're old-fashioned."

Fear crept into Shirley's heart -- cold, clutching fear. "But I haven't changed, Tim," she said softly, breathing a silent prayer to God for help and deliverance. "My God-given convictions are still firmly and securely intact. Proverbs 22:1 states that 'A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold.' Also, we are admonished to 'Abstain from all appearance of evil.' "

Turning quickly she sped back along the beach toward the house, praying as she ran.

Tim's hand, strong and sure, came down roughly upon her arm. Twisting it, he spun her around to face him. "Look here, girl, you're not making a fool of me!" he exclaimed in anger. "I quit my job to come home and see you . . ."

"But Tim, I . . . I don't understand; I've never given you reason to think even that I cared for you. You asked me to write you while you were away, yes. I said I would since I knew you'd be lonesome. But it was always on a friendly basis only. You'll have to admit this, Tim. Please, let go of my arm; you're hurting me!"

"Shirley. Shirley." A familiar voice carried on the warm sea air and floated like a song of victory to the near-frantic girl. "Are you all right, Shirley?"

With tears flowing down her ashen-white cheeks, Shirley broke away from her captor and fled down the beach toward her rapidly approaching mother.

"Oh, Mother! Mother!" she cried, falling on the anxious woman's shoulder and

"What's wrong, Shirley? Tell me about it, please!" she begged, wrapping her arms tightly and securely around her daughter's trembling body.

"Tim, Mother! Tim! I . . . I believe he's demented. He's not the Tim who used to come to church. Something's happened to him. Something dreadfully fearful and frightening."

"He acted strange when he came to the door asking for you. I told him you had gone out, but I didn't tell him where, honey. I had a fearful feeling. I tried to pray, but the still, small voice of God prodded me gently to come and find you. Oh, I'm so glad I obeyed. But come, we'll go back to the house. God will take care of you," Mrs. Channing said, speaking confidently.

Once inside the living room door, Shirley slumped into the nearest chair, feeling limp and weak from the ordeal. Relating to her mother what took place . . . Tim's sudden bold appearance and his even bolder and more brazen suggestion, which became almost a demanding command that she go to The Point with him the girl shuddered, adding, "He had a wild, weird look in his eyes -- a glazed sort of look in them, Mother I was really frightened. God sent you in answer to my silent but fervent prayer for help from above; for deliverance."

"I have hesitated mentioning this to you, Shirley, lest it sound like idle gossip, which is sinful, but it has been reported by a reliable source that the young man is on drugs. Someone who works at the same place Tim works . . . or, I should say, used to work, for you just told me he quit his job . . . said Tim has fallen in with bad and exceedingly wicked and evil companions. His mother's heart is breaking. She talked to me last week about her great concern for him."

"Di... did she mention that he was using drugs, Mother?"

"No, she didn't. She said, though, that the burden on her heart for him was crushing her. So, my dear, I'd rather you didn't take those early morning walks anymore; it isn't safe. As for the sea shells you find, well, we'll go for them together. I'll feel a whole lot less anxious knowing you're not walking alone, dear."

"That's fine with me," Shirley said. "After what has just happened, I don't want to go for any more early morning walks, beautiful though they have been and uplifting to my soul."

"I think we should get down on our knees and thank God for being 'an ever-present help in time of trouble.' "

After a good season of prayer, Shirley helped to clean the house. Then she dressed for work. The little shop in which she worked was located near a sturdy pier that jutted far out into the water. Here mothers wheeled their children and sat on the benches which lined the middle of the sturdy pier and here the casual onlooker could get an excellent view of both the ocean and the beach, which stretched for miles and miles on either side of the structure.

A customer came in, laying picture post cards on the counter and a small knick-knack souvenir. "I lack one penny of having the right amount," the woman said, eyeing Shirley with a calculating grin on her full face. "Ring it up for the amount I have," she bargained, "or I don't want these things."

Shirley was shocked. "I'm sorry, Ma'am," she said quickly, "I can't do that. It would be dishonest and sinful. Why not put one of the post cards back?" she suggested kindly.

Anger rose in the woman, revealing its ugly self on her face and in her eyes. "Who would know the difference?" she asked hotly.

"Oh, I would, Ma'am; and God would. I'm sorry, but I can't do it."

With a quick hand, the woman swept the cards off the counter on to the floor, knocking the knick-knack down with them and smashing it to tiny pieces. Then, without so much as an "I'm sorry," or a "thank you for your time," she hurried out of the little shop, where she was soon lost in the crowd of milling, shopping, or just looking tourists who thronged the streets and filled the shops.

Hurrying quickly to the other side of tile counter, Shirley began clearing the broken glass away when Mr. Pinnonnotti, the shop owner, stood over her.

"A nasty thing to do!" he exclaimed. "Yes, a very nasty thing. But you are to be commended," he complimented.

Shirley finished getting the last bit of broken glass up off the floor. "I... I didn't realize you were here," she said. "People like that just can't be completely happy.' They can't; their conscience would torment them too much."

The elderly man, his eyes having a far-away look in them, said, "Some people..., like that woman... don't have any conscience, Shirley."

Choosing her words carefully, the young woman said, "We all have a conscience, Mr. Pinnonnotti, but some have seared theirs beyond the hurting and the talking-back-to-them stage."

Changing the subject abruptly, the shop owner said, "You could have done it you know. What the woman asked, I mean. Why didn't you?"

"Because I am a Christian, Sir. I love the Lord Jesus Christ with all my being. That would have been dishonest and it would have brought a black mark... a blot..., upon my name and my reputation. Proverbs 22:1 says, 'A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold.'"

"Does it say that, Shirley? Really and truly?"

"Yes, Mr. Pinnonnotti, it does."

"I have noticed you have been different from any other girl I have ever had working for me; now I think I know the reason," the man said thoughtfully. Looking her full in the face, he asked, "Do you suppose you could come by the house some time after work and tell Mrs. Pinnonnotti and me more about the Bible? We're far down the 'other side' of life's hill and . . . and.., well., we're both afraid of dying. You could help us--show us a better way, I'm sure. Will you do it, Shirley, please?" The man finished and Shirley, looking at him, saw tears trickle down his weathered cheeks.

"I will be delighted to come, Mr. Pinnonnotti. Delighted!" she added emphatically, greatly moved and touched by the man's plea and his confession of fear. "But you must remember that it will have to be God who helps you. I am flesh and blood, like you. I will be God's instrument... His tool; but God alone can bring about the radical change and inward transformation."

"I realize this. But we need help badly, and you will be God's mouthpiece to us. What you say, we will do."

A group of noisy teens came in just then and the conversation ended abruptly.

The day passed by like some beautiful song or melody, and Shirley could scarcely wait until she could speak to the Pinnonnotti's about her wonderful Lord and Saviour. They were ready to turn to Him, she knew.

It was a heart-stirring thought, she mused, waiting on her last customer while humming "How Firm A Foundation." Yes, a heart-stirring, soul-uplifting thought indeed!

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THE END