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The Right To Be Loved

By Mrs. Paul E. King

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Elsie sat on the front porch swing with a book in her hands. She couldn't concentrate well today. Her thoughts troubled her. In some ways, she wished she were doing something different than what she was. But then, it had been highly rewarding work, and she felt as if she was rendering a service to those less fortunate than herself.

When she thought of some of the unfortunate, helpless, and almost hopeless cases, she sighed heavily. Involuntarily, tears stung her eyes. Quickly she brushed them aside, trying at the same instant to forget. Then, like a flash, he popped before her.



"Oh, no! Not again!" she exclaimed wearily as the memory picture of a boy and his words, along with a hungry-looking, innocent face, projected itself realistically upon her.

Taking quick steps, she hurried inside and busied herself with dusting and polishing the marble table tops and vacuuming carpets. Perhaps she could forget. But no, he faced her now just as he had two days ago:

"Miss Ellie," he had said, an confused-like, "If you can't find my Mama can you find a real house for me to live in? I'm sure I'd love my new Mama and I would do anything she asked me to do. You're a good woman, Miss Ellie . . . like grandma was before she died . . . an' . . . an' you're always helpin' people. Can't you help me?"

She remembered how she threw her arms around the lad and folded him tightly to her as her tears wet his tousled golden-colored hair. "Do something?" How she wished she could!

She heard the matron's voice again.., as though it were just being told to her: "I tell you, Ellie Smith, if some mothers don't change and learn to love their children and want them, we're going to have a generation of tyrannical despots and desperadoes. See if we don't! God made women for the express purpose of being an helpmeet for her husband, a keeper of the house and a bearer of children . . ."

Sara Ellington, a pleasant-faced, plump woman in her late forties, and Ellie had been life-long friends. As such, she felt perfectly at ease to divulge more information: "Look at Robbie Cranston, Ellie. It's as though the little fellow never had a friend since that woman dumped him off here so very long ago."

"What woman, Sara?" Ellie had asked anxiously.

"His mother, of course. She told the boy they were going for a ride and when she got here she put him out and went on her way. Disappeared--just like that! Imagine! And she's never come back. The little fellow just sits and pines. I tell you, Ellie, it breaks my heart. God's got a sure-enough reckoning day coming."

Ellie thought of the many children at the orphanage and her heart of compassion went out in earnest yearning and prayerfulness to them. For the most part, the children in the orphanage were content and happy since many of them had known nothing but the big, well-kept building as home. But to others . . . those like Robbie and six or seven more . . . it would never be home -- merely a place to stay until someone cared enough to do something about them.

"It's too bad," Ellie said aloud now, "that I'm not a bit younger. I could take Robbie and many more like him, and raise them for God and His cause. This house is big enough for..." her words hung in midair as a sudden thought whirled its way dizzily, merrily through her brain.

She hurried to the mirror in the entranceway of the downstairs hallway and faced herself. True, her hair was silver-streaked. Her face, once youthful, fair, and lovely to look at, now bore a few odd lines and wrinkles once not there, but what did that matter? Every child needed at least one grandmother to coddle, pet, and love him and to feed him big, fat homemade gingerbread boys whose plump little gingery vests sported raisins just waiting for a chubby hand to pluck them out and eat them with delight and relish!

Ellie's spirits mounted high. She hurried up the stairs to her bedroom and changed into her prettiest pink crepe dress. Lightly, she stroked the few unruly strands of hair back from her forehead and secured them in place with the neat coil on the back of her

head. As she hurried down the stairs, she felt almost young again. The ride to Drayshire Hills was made in record time.

As the sprawling orphanage set high on a windswept hill loomed before her, Ellie felt her excitement mounting. She brought the car to an abrupt halt and was soon surrounded by a dozen or more happy-faced boys and girls.

"Hello, Miss Ellie," they chorused pleasantly. She patted each little head and smiled broadly. Her work as a Community Welfare Worker had made her a much-loved, well-known figure at Drayshire Hills.

"Where's Mrs. Ellington?" she asked. Immediately the children sought her hand and escorted her to the visitor's lobby.

"Her was just here," a bright-eyed, four-year-old said softly, looking appealingly up into Miss Ellie's honest, sympathetic eyes, "but her gone now."

"Not exactly, Cynthia," Sara Ellington said, laughing softly down into the little girl's eyes. She came through the doorway, bringing with her an armful of blooming, dogwood and wild Azaleas. "I went down the hill after these. I thought they'd bring cheer and sunshine and some of God's wonderful 'outdoor' beauty inside for the children," and she set about arranging the pink and salmon colored azaleas in big, tall vases among the branches of dogwood. "What brings you here today, Ellie?" she asked. "More problems?"

"I'm quitting my job with the Child Welfare Agency, Sara," Ellie said softly, stepping close to her friend.

"You're what?" and Sara Ellington stood tall and erect as she faced her friend. "Oh, Ellie!" she exclaimed, fastening her hands firmly on the other's shoulders. "You've been a joy and a delight to work with. Suppose we get someone ruthless, harsh, intolerant and unkind!"

"I'll see that we don't," Ellie said firmly. "Mrs. Appleton's been wanting something like this . . . ever since Mary Beth went away to Bible School. Mary Beth's the last of their children at home," she explained. "Mrs. Appleton will be excellent, Sara; she's a devout Christian."

"But what are you going to do?" Sara was baffled . . . plainly so.

"Me?" a mischievous smile played prettily across Ellie's fair face. "I'm going into the adopting business."

"You . . . you're what?" Sara was aghast. "Ellie," she said it as gently as she knew how to say it, "you... you're too old to... ah... assume the role of mother."

"But never too old to assume the role of grandmother, dear Sara. By the way, where's Robbie?"

"Robbie?" Sara thought hard. "Oh, I believe I saw him down at the foot of the hill watching the merry little stream run gleefully by. He looks so wistful and lonely and sad that I can hardly stand to look at him. He's been praying a lot since he got saved. He says the dear Lord Jesus is soon going to send him a real mother since his own mother doesn't want him."

"And God is going to answer that prayer, Sara-quicker even than Robbie expects," and Miss Ellie hurried out the door and down the gently sloping hillside to the merry little stream.

She saw Robbie then. His boyish little sun-tanned face was resting lightly in the palms of his two chubby hands and His much-worn pants sported a bright red plaid patch on the right knee. As he sat on a piece of fallen log staring intently into the stream, Ellie couldn't help but notice how small and vulnerable he looked seated thus.

She had a sudden impulse to rush up to him and crush him hard to her mother bosom. But, no, that would frighten the child. Very casually, softly, and quiet-like, she said, "Stop daydreaming, Robbie. Let's go home."

"Oh, Miss Ellie! You . . . you frightened . . . what did you say?" His eyes were beaming brightly. Quickly he was on his feet. Taking her strong hand, he held it tightly, giving it a tender kiss every now and then. "Has . . . has God sent me a real Mama?" he asked, tears spilling out over his dark eyelashes.

"Yes, Robbie, He has." Ellie paused to blow her nose and wipe her eyes.

"Is . . . is . . . she a Christian like you? An' . . . an' like Mrs. Ellington?"

"She's a Christian, Robbie, a real born-again Christian. She's sanctified, too, and she'll love you very much. I hope you'll love her as much as she loves you."

"If she's like you, I'll love her very, very, very much!" The positive exclamation sent a fresh shower of tears spilling joyously down Miss Ellie's fair face.

"Then we shah get along fine, Robbie. I'm taking you with me to town and get things started to legally adopt you. You will five with me for always., so long as I shall five. We shall have to see about getting four or five others, too. You will need some brothers and sisters, to grow up normally."

"I knew Jesus heard me when I told Him about this." Robbie's eyes were dancing now. "Could . . . could we take little Joey home with us? He's so sad since his mama

died and he's had to come here. His papa doesn't want him.., not ever! I know; I heard him tell Mrs. Ellington so. Joey heard it, too an', . . . an' he went an' cried till he fell asleep. I put my arms around him like grandmother used to do to me but he cried anyhow."

"We'll get Joey, too, Robbie. Yes, we'll take Joey and as many more like him as we can. I have a big house that's needing just one thing. Guess what that is!"

"I . . . I don't 'zactly know." Robbie's eyes were wide with wonder. "You tell me."

"It needs boys and girls to five in, to romp and play, read and sing and pray in. God is giving me these boys and girls now. I see it plainly."

The ride to town was a merry one. Miss Ellie's car rang with the soft, sweet, happy laughter of six happy children.

Her resignation from the position she had worked so diligently and faithfully at for the fifteen years since her husband's death was received with shock but immediately filled by the capable, Christian Mrs. Appleton (all this upon Miss Ellie's recommendation) and, after a period of checking and waiting, Miss Ellie became the happy possessor of six healthy, happy, contented children through the adoption agency.

Strange but marvelous things began happening in the life of both Miss Ellie and her big house. The house, once nothing more than a meticulously-kept mansion, now rang with life, luster, and laughter . . . all of which were well-seasoned and well-tempered by a holy Christian atmosphere. Its walls rang with lusty, hearty singing, noisy piano practice lessons and merry laughter.., a glorious by-product of real contentment and sincere love.

"Mother," as the children insisted upon calling her, became miraculously recreated in both body and spirit. Never, in all the fifteen years of her widowhood, had she felt as well as now. She was eating better, sleeping better, and feeling better than she had for years. In giving of herself, her time, her money, her love, she had learned to five!

She had thought her life full and rewarding while working for the Child Welfare Department, but her joy knew no boundaries now . . . she was investing in fives. The feeling was wonderful, exhilarating. Most of all, she had a feeling of fulfillment . . . divine fulfillment . . . "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these . . . Ye have done it unto Me."

Little wonder then that her happy heart had continual praise and a joyful song. She was imparting to each child what he most needed . . . THE RIGHT TO BE LOVED!

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THE END