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A Strange Thanksgiving



by Mrs. Paul E. King

A STRANGE THANKSGIVING By Mrs. Paul E. King

"How come you're singing?" Valerie asked Ginger Frigate as she fell in step with her friend.

Ginger laughed. "What a stupid question, Val! I'm singing because I'm happy, that's why."

"I guess I'm just not the emotional kind," Valerie answered smiling. "At least I doubt I'd be singing if all my fondest hopes had been smashed and my Thanksgiving had turned out the way yours is. Whew! I know I wouldn't have the grace and the patience your mother and you have. Why'd you take that woman in anyhow?" the black-haired girl asked quickly.

"The Frigate kindness and compassion, Valerie. It's a spontaneous, natural and everyday way of living at our house. Even stray dogs and cats are received with love and treated with kindness. And do we ever get our share of these!" Ginger exclaimed pleasantly. "The word must spread all over town that no one, and no animal, is turned away."

"What do you do with all the animals, Ginger?"

"Try to find good homes for them."

"And if you don't succeed . . . ?"

Ginger laughed again. "Generally, we do succeed. If not, we have a farmer friend who takes the poor, dear creatures and cares for them until they expire of a natural cause. Of course, they have better than 200 acres in which to hunt mice -- this, for the cats -- or roam the fields -- for the dogs."

"Back to that woman, Ginger; will she be staying longer than Thanksgiving?"

"This we don't know, Val. She just sort of 'dropped' into our small town. When Pastor Norwood called mother two days ago and asked if she could put a woman up for the night, we had no idea she'd still be here. So, naturally, Mom asked her to stay and have Thanksgiving with us."

"But you were going to spend a couple of days with your cousin in the city and then all of you were coming here for Thanksgiving you said. Aren't you disappointed, Ginger?"

"A little bit; but not too greatly. You see, Valerie, I believe that, since I belong to God, anything and everything that happens to me comes by God's permissive will. We are told in the Bible to 'Rejoice in the Lord always.' So I will not only rejoice in the Lord but I am trying daily to acquire the habit of giving thanks always, too . . . in each and every circumstance of my life. I wouldn't

think of going away and leaving Mother alone in the house with a stranger. Dad and Dan won't be home till this evening some time, the Lord willing. They went to help Sis and her husband move."

"What do you think about this woman?" Valerie asked suddenly.

"Think about her?" Ginger asked with a dimpled smile. "That's hard to answer, dear Valerie. Really hard to answer. You see, try as we may to draw the poor soul out in conversation, it's almost like a closed book all the time. We learned this much; she's hitchhiking from the east coast to Florida. But where she's lived, what's she's done for a living, and whether she has living relatives or what's wrong, well, we honestly don't know. Her lips are sealed as tightly as our canned fruits and vegetables are. We respect her privacy and try never to invade it, though we do wish there were some way we could penetrate her shell with the good news of salvation."

"Maybe you are, even though you're not aware of it."

"Oh I hope so!" came Ginger's quick reply. "Mother and I feel God sent her to us for a purpose. She's respectful and reverent when we pray at the table and we did learn that her name is Marissa. She's in her mid-thirties, Mother thinks."

"I wonder if she has a husband somewhere . . . and maybe some children, too."

"It's possible, Val. But like I said, her lips are sealed. Bro. Norwood told Mom he talked with her for quite some time when she came to the parsonage asking if she could sleep in the church. But he learned only what Mother and I did; that she was hitch-hiking her way to Florida and that her name's Marissa. No last name given either."

"What if she stays forever, Ginger, like the castoff animals do? Until your folks find good homes for them, that is."

"She won't. She's not that type; you can tell it by looking at her. She'll leave when whatever the purpose in her coming is fulfilled," Ginger answered as she hurried into the grocery store for the last-minute items on her mother's grocery list.

"It's almost like a mystery story," Valerie told her friend as they quickly found what Ginger's mother needed and checked out through the long line of Customers at the cash register.

Ginger laughed and agreed with Valerie and when she was almost home, she said, "Why don't you come in and help me with the last batch of cookies? You'd get a peek at Marissa; not much more. She stays up in her room all the time except for her meals."

"Weird! Weird! " Valerie exclaimed. "But I'd love to help you finish whatever kind of cookies you'll be baking. That sounds great! Thanks Ginger, you're a real doll and I'm so thankful the Lord sent you my way. Honestly, I guess if I had to tell what one thing I was most thankful for, outside of knowing and loving the Lord, it would be you. Because you came into this neighborhood, and loved me when I was downright hateful and catty to you, well, God got a hold on my life and through your beautiful example of pure Christian Love and kindness, He won my heart. It was through you! Never forget this."

"Give God all the glory and praise, Valerie. He alone is worthy of praise."

"Right. I will. But you were His instrument. I'll never forget this. Mm-m!" Valerie exclaimed as the door opened and she stepped inside. "It smells really scrumptious in here, Mrs. Frigate. All spicy and Thanksgiving-ish. That's my word; I made it up right now," she teased. "You won't find it in the dictionary but it describes what I smell."

Mrs. Frigate laughed. "Take your coat off and hang it in the closet, Valerie," she said, "then make yourself at home."

"This is my second home, mother tells me," the tall, likable girl answered as she hung her short coat inside the closet and tied one of Ginger's aprons around her waist, announcing, "I'm ready to work."

"Thanks, I can use you," Mrs. Frigate replied as she took the ice box cookies from the refrigerator and handed Valerie a knife.

"Mm-m! Some of your wonderful black walnut ice box cookies, huh?"

"Your favorite, as I recall," Mrs. Frigate answered. "I was going to have Ginger bring some over to you when they were baked. But now you'll have the privilege of sampling them hot from the oven."

"Didn't you want me to make those delicious chocolate nut cookies, Mother?"

"By all means, dear. They are your father's favorite. He calls them his 'can't-get-enough-of' cookies, Valerie," Mrs. Frigate explained.

"And I'm sure he's right about that," Valerie declared, slicing the chilled, log-shaped dough and placing the cut slices on cookie sheets for baking.

Between Valerie and Ginger, the tupperware containers filled up fast with freshly baked and stored cookies. The house took on the aroma of a bake shop; the atmosphere was filled with laughter and gaiety and merriment; the fellowship of the three was unbroken, sweetly-pleasant and wonderful.

Valerie broke the brief interlude of silence. "I can't describe my feelings every time I come over to your house, Mrs. Frigate," she said softly. "It's as though the Lord Himself were here in person."

"He is here, Valerie," Mrs. Frigate answered, "even though we can't see Him. So many people stumble over the fact that 'no man hath seen God at any time' (I John 4:12). Yet it's so simple to see through and to believe; for in the very same verse we are told 'if we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us.'

" 'Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit.' This is verse 13. Then in St. John's Gospel we read, 'God is a Spirit: And they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.' "

"I guess I can say with all honesty and sincerity, Mrs. Frigate, that I never doubted God's existence since you folks moved to our town. I knew He was real because I saw Him living in each of you. Ginger was God's special instrument used to convict me of my sins and to convince me of the reality of full salvation through Christ. I'm so thankful I didn't try to rationalize or temporize the Scripture verses Ginger gave to me that told of my need of a

Saviour and Christ. I went home and looked the verses up for myself and, sure enough, they were exactly as she had quoted them to me. They went through my heart like a dagger. At first Mother thought I was losing my mind; now, however . . . since she sees how changed I really am . . . she's happy for me. God is working in Mother's heart. I feel it's only a matter of time until she'll yield and give her heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ."

"We're all praying for that glad day, Valerie," Mrs. Frigate replied as she broke stale bread into a large bowl for stuffing the turkey. "I invited your folks over for tomorrow, if God spares us all, but your mother said you were going to her sister's home for Thanksgiving dinner."

Valerie took a bite out of one of the hot cookies as she replied, "I'd much rather be here with you all. I don't feel at ease in Aunt Hilda's home. It . . . it's so worldly. And there's so much smoking going on that I reek of tobacco by the time we leave. My pores seem to be saturated with the odor and my hair actually stinks from it. The first thing I do when I get home, is get a good hot bath and shampoo my hair thoroughly."

Ginger laughed. "Know what Valerie told me one day when she got back from her aunt's home, Mother?" she asked. "She said Aunt Hilda's living room looked like a bunch of miniature smoking chimneys . . . there were eight pipe smokers puffing away at the same time! Imagine! A couple of the men smoked cigars and four or five people were smoking cigarettes. It would be like a smokehouse, wouldn't it?"

Mrs. Frigate sighed sadly. "How changed their lives would be if they knew Christ!" she exclaimed. "And how happy too!"

Valerie looked at the hands of the clock on the wall then she took off her apron and hurried to the closet for her coat, saying, I promised Mother I'd be home before four, and look at that clock; ten minutes till four. The time flies when I come over to your house. See you day after tomorrow, the Lord willing, if not before. Thanks much for the privilege of helping with the cookies," she called across her shoulder as she started for the door.

"Not so fast," Ginger teased, following Valerie and tucking a cookie-filled canister under her arm. " 'Be ye kind one to another'. Remember that scripture verse?"

Valerie laughed and blew a kiss Ginger's way, saying softly, "I'll never forget it; how could I? You're the spirit of kindness."

Ginger closed the door then hurried back to the kitchen to help her mother with the Thanksgiving dinner preparations. She was glad that she hadn't gone to the city with her aunt when she had driven down to their town a few days earlier. Her mother needed her and, God willing, Auntie and her entire family would be in for the Thanksgiving dinner which was less than 24 hours away. She would not only see her aunt and uncle then but her cousins, as well.

Her mother and she worked together beautifully. By the time the mantel clock struck the hour of six, the pies and cakes were all baked, the celery and carrots were washed, cleaned, bagged and refrigerated and supper was on the table.

"Go upstairs and tell Marissa we're ready to eat," Mrs. Frigate told Ginger. "I thought your father and brother would be home by now, but it's obvious they're not. We'll go ahead and eat; I can reheat the food when they arrive."

Ginger hurried upstairs to the room where Marissa was staying. She gasped when she saw the open door and no Marissa. "She . . . she's gone!" she said aloud in disbelief. "Gone!"

She stepped into the room. The bed was neatly made. Everything looked just as it had looked when Jackie left it to be married to Tom two weeks ago. Where was Marissa? Ginger wondered. And when did she leave? How had she gotten out of the house with neither of them hearing her leave?

She stood thinking. Then she spied the note on one of the pillows. Picking it up, she read:

"Dear friends,

How can I thank you for your kindness -- ever!

I'll never be able to repay you for what you have done for me. I meant to stay only one night. However, the love and kindness I felt in your home

compelled me to stay longer. (I must find out what they have, I told myself. So I stayed.)

Today, while the delightful fragrance of baking cookies spiraled up the stairway and the even-more-delightful sound of laughing, content and happy teens reached my ears, I could stand it no longer. Leaving my room, I slipped to the top of the stairs and eavesdropped. (Forgive me, please; I had to do it). When your friend said she felt as though the Lord Himself were here in person, I knew I had my answer.

You, my kind and gracious Mrs. Frigate, opened the gate wide by your comments and quotes from the Bible. Thank you, everyone, for helping to lead a soul out of darkness into Light; out of sorrow and sadness into joy and gladness; out of unrest into perfect peace. (I slipped quietly back to my room after hearing those beautiful words about knowing that we dwell in Him and He in us, fell to the floor on my face and told Him I wanted to know this).

I leave with a wonderful peace in my heart and a love beyond describing for you all. I'm going back home; I have a lot of rectifying and straightening up to do. But I have Someone who'll help me. Pray for me, please. Thanks much.

Marissa"

Ginger folded the paper then hurried down the stairs to her mother, happy tears in her eyes. When her mother was finished reading the note, she would call Valerie, she decided as she pressed the piece of paper into her mother's hand.

Romans 8:28 came quickly to her mind then and she smiled.