

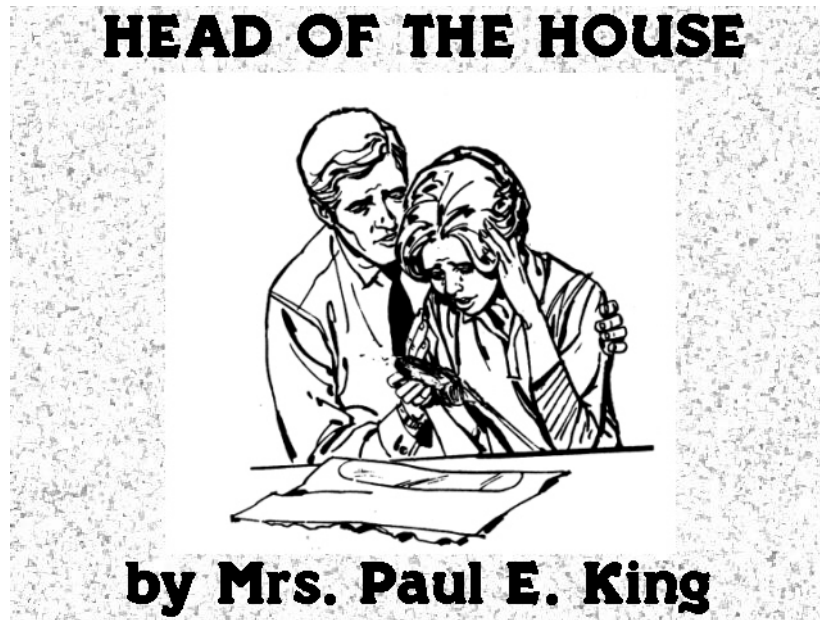
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**HEAD OF THE HOUSE**  
**By Mrs. Paul E. King**

Lights along the boulevard almost blinded Will as he drove toward the neat pale yellow, trimmed in white, two-story house which was his home. He sighed tiredly but contentedly. It would be good to get home, he mused silently. So very good. He hoped Glenna would have supper waiting for him. He was hungry, and extremely tired, too. Twelve-hour work days could be quite exhausting on even a strong man. Occasionally would not be too bad;

but to work twelve hours day after day six days a week at a two month stretch, well, that was something else. The pay check was bigger, to be sure. But there were things in a man's life, other than fat paychecks, which were far greater in value. Like Glenna and the children, for instance. He hardly saw the three little ones God had given into Glenna's and his care. This troubled him. Why, before he realized it almost, they would be into their early teens.

Will sighed. He loved his family. Next to God and his own soul, he considered them his most priceless earthly possessions. And the awesome thing about them was that God had entrusted each of them into his care. Yes, as head of his home he was not only to provide for their physical, material and temporal needs but for their spiritual needs as well.

Sometimes he almost trembled when he remembered what his God-planned duties were as head of the house. It was a natural thing with him, to be sure, for love flowing from one member to another made carrying out his duties, as such, a delight. Another added and rich bonus was the fact that his own father had lovingly and righteously executed his office of headship smoothly and kindly but firmly in front of his offspring until, to the males in their family, assuming their rightful role as such when they married was as natural a thing to do as breathing out and breathing in was. Still, it was an awesome responsibility.

He thought of his wife and their three fine sons and tears of joy filled his eyes. Sunday was the only day left when he could spend the entire day together with them. What joy he felt as they sat in the church pew and worshiped God together Sunday morning and night. How pricelessly important and valuable were the quiet talks and the walks to the little woods beyond their modest but neat house on some Sunday afternoons. Always, he tried hard to make it up to the boys for the many hours which he was not privileged to spend with them through the week days.

A worried look crossed Will's still-young face when he thought of Glenna. Lately, when he came home, the house looked like some others in which he had gone into before the twelve-hour days took effect. (How he did miss not being able to go out witnessing those two nights a week anymore! He felt as though one of the most important phases and aspects of his life was missing. Oh, he witnessed for Christ at work, without a doubt. He took advantage of each and every available opportunity, even made some opportunities so he could tell a troubled soul about Christ. But those two

nights a week . . . well, they were special. Maybe it was because he had made a sacrifice to go a sacrifice of time, or of a project that needed finishing. Whatever. God had blessed those evenings, often with souls being converted. This was his reward. It was so very satisfying).

His thoughts traveled once more back to Glenna. Oh, how he did love that dark haired woman! And it was difficult for him to understand just what was happening . . . or what had happened . . . to have brought about the change in her. Once a careful, neat housekeeper-homemaker, lately the house looked like she could care less what its order was, the kitchen especially. Even his evening meal had suffered by the change. He had said nothing to anyone but the Lord. To Him he had talked by the hour.

He turned off the busy highway and headed down a much less traveled road, winding up and down its tree-shaded lane until he reached the small town in which he lived. Lights burned inside his home, and no sooner had he parked the car than three boyish voices greeted him with, "Daddy! Daddy! You're home! You're home! Oh, goody! Goody!"

A light came on in Will's eyes. A "homecoming light" his oldest son had called it once. Stooping, he gathered all three of the boys into the loving circle of his arms. "Say, I miss you fellows!" he exclaimed hoarsely, the truth of his statement flowing from deep inside him to them.

"And we miss you, Daddy! Jared, the oldest exclaimed.

"Yes," Jonathan piped up, "Mommy's on the phone almost all day."

"Not quite all day," Joshua added by way of correcting what he considered was too strong an assertion made by his younger brother Jonathan. "But she does talk long."

"It's Haley Smith, Daddy," Jared related. "She calls Mommy and calls Mommy."

Will, wanting to change the subject, said quickly, "Well, I'm home now. And tonight, God willing, I'm going to play some kind of games with my three very favorite, very special boys. Okay, let's go in. I'm hungry. "

"We ate," Jonathan said.

"We had canned spaghetti, Daddy." Jared's eyes were so big and honest looking. "It's not good like what Mommy makes. But I guess Haley needs help, too. "

Will picked Jonathan up, set him on his shoulders, the boy's legs dangling down his chest. "Hold on to Daddy's neck," Will ordered as he took hold of Jared's and Joshua's hand and made a grand entrance inside calling, "I'm home, Honey. What's for supper? I'm hungry. "

Glenna waved a hand at him, saying as she held the telephone away from her, "Supper's in the oven, Will. "

"It's Haley again," Jared announced sadly. "All Mommy gets done anymore is talk to her, Daddy. She never plays with us, and she can't even read our Bible story to us anymore."

"Maybe I can read to you before you go to bed tonight. Okay? Would you like that?" Will asked.

The boys squealed with delight.

"Now, while I eat supper, suppose you boys run upstairs and turn the water on for Daddy's bath. Get my house shoes and bathrobe. And don't forget my pajamas. I'll be up as soon as I finish eating."

The children scurried away, squealing with delight.

Will walked into the kitchen and saw the stack of dirty dishes in the sink and on the table. His heart sank. What was happening to Glenna? he wondered. He opened the oven door and drew out his supper . . . a quick, frozen TV dinner. Well, he guessed he could eat whatever was beneath its tightly foil-encased exterior even though they didn't own a television set and he wouldn't be eating it, therefore, seated in front of the blue tube god.

He turned the foil back and saw that it was a baked ham dinner. Bowing his head, he gave thanks to God for the food; then he ate. He poured a glass of milk for himself and spied a frozen cherry dessert nearby. It looked good. He took it out of the refrigerator and ate it before hurrying up the stairs to the boys.

The boys played outside the bathroom door until Will was bathed and dressed in his pajamas and robe. As soon as the door opened, they grabbed him by his legs and wouldn't let him go. "Story, Daddy," they chimed. "Read us a story."

"How'd you like to have us all lay on the floor together and read?" Will asked.

"Yes! Yes! Let's do that!"

"Okay, then I want each of you to do just as I did: Get a bath, hang up your clothes and get into your pajamas and a robe. Then I'll play a game with you and read to you."

"Goody! Goody! Oh, Daddy, I'm so glad you're here!" Jared cried, hurrying to his room with his two brothers following him.

Will supervised the bathing and soon the three pajama-clad boys were snuggled cozily-close to their father, listening quietly and intently as he read the great stories of the Bible to them.

It was getting late. But he had promised them a game of some kind; so he kept his promise. Lying on the floor, he said, "Let's play a 'Who Am I?' game. Each of us will think of some great Bible character and tell something which he or she did. The rest of us will try to guess who this great man or woman is . . . ."

The game went on for an hour. A happy, relaxing Bible-educating hour. And when Will finally tucked his sons in bed, after praying with them and for them and kissing them good night, he was truly exhausted. But he had a satisfying feeling, like he had bridged something which the boys had been lacking lately.

He went into his own bedroom and knelt for prayer. The fountain of his tears gushed out. In an agony of soul, he travailed with God over Glenna's change. If things didn't right themselves soon, he would have to speak to her, he knew. Yes, as head of his house and his home, he must. God would hold him accountable if he didn't.

He prayed for a long while, prayed until he knew he had prayed clear through and reached the heart and the ear of God. Then he hurried down the stairs. Glenna was still on the phone. The kitchen was still in a shambles; the dishes unwashed, the boys' plates just as they had left them.

He sat in a chair facing her. She looked at him and gave a long, drawn-out sigh, shaking her head while tears swam in her eyes. Instantly Will sensed what was going on. He reached over and gently took the receiver out of Glenna's hand and held it to his own ear, drawing her close to his heart.

After a while he said, "Well, Haley, I must hang up. You've kept Glenna tied up for days and I must get to bed. My wife has the breakfast and dinner and supper dishes to do tonight yet. Not to mention the dirty kitchen floor which, if I know Glenna, she'll not let wait until morning. We'll be praying for you . . ." But Haley never heard that last statement; she banged the receiver down in anger.

Glenna sobbed. Will held her close to his heart. "Why didn't you say something, Honey?" he asked. "Why?"

"I didn't want to bother you, Dear. You look so tired when you come home anymore. But Will, oh, I felt I was losing my mind. All this work piling up; my boys neglected and deprived; and my husband too! Oh, thank God, thank God, that you had enough spiritual discernment and godly wisdom to know what to do. I felt like a trapped animal, nearly going to pieces when I'd answer the phone and feeling too guilty just to let it ring and not answer it. Oh, Will, pray that she'll not call me anymore. You know how conscientious I am about everything . . ."

"And that's where God wants me to step in, Honey. If you're too timid . . . too conscientious . . . to just let the phone ring and ring and ring, where Haley is concerned, well, I'll handle this for you. In fact, I think maybe I just did. She slammed the receiver down. Haley's noted for tying people up like this, with her day-into-night telephone conversation sessions. Well, let's tackle those stacks of dishes together and the kitchen floor and then I must get some sleep."

"We'll put them in soapy water for soaking, honey. I can do them in the morning when I get you off for work, God willing. You need your rest and sleep. I can manage very well if I don't need to hang on the phone all day."

"I'll have it taken out, if you say the word," Glenna. "

She laughed softly. "I believe maybe you're right about Haley. That her calling here is finished. She'll find another softie . . . poor soul . . . whose husband will have to rescue her, if she gets rescued. That's a curse, Will, and a sin, too, I do believe, to steal other peoples' valuable and limited time. Thanks for rescuing me. I love you. And now, with God's help, this queen of her husband's castle will function according to God's plan and make the king really feel and believe that he is the king of this castle."

"I've never doubted it," Will said, planting a kiss on her pretty nose and leading her gently into the kitchen.