

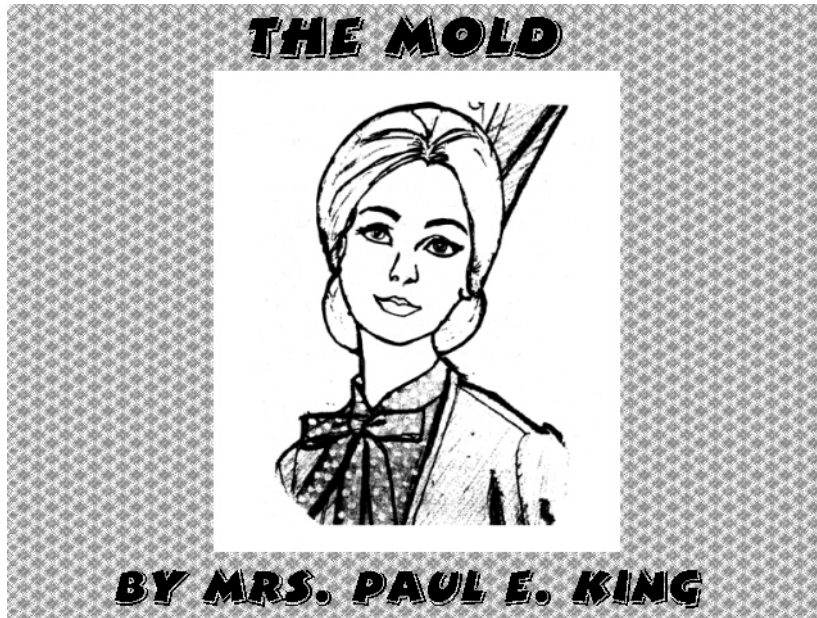
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THE MOLD
By Mrs. Paul E. King

It was unreal, every part of it unreal, Ginger thought, running to her room and closing the door. Every time her one relative came to visit, the conversation traveled down the same vein of thought: "Why can't you be like Candace? Why don't you wear your hair like Candace does? You'd be a lot prettier and your face wouldn't look quite so oval and heartshaped? Why don't you use inflection in your voice, like Candace? Your conversation and

speech would be far more interesting and effective. It's too bad that you don't know how to study like Candace does; you'd be farther up the road scholastically if you did."

On and on and on, the list of "like Candace does" stretched. There were times . . . like today . . . when Ginger felt that she just couldn't endure another "like Candace" comparison or order.

She threw herself across the bed and let the tears take their natural course down her cheeks. It wasn't that she disliked her cousin; not at all. Truth of the matter was, she loved her vivacious and beautiful young relative very sincerely and deeply. Candace was smart and intelligent; and she was bubbly and pleasant, too. One felt happy and light and good in her presence. To Candace, people were extremely important. She had the ability and art of making one feel special and needed around her, a thing that came from deep inside her living heart and was as natural as breathing was to her. But that was Candace; she was just the way the Lord had made her, and she, Ginger, was trying ever so hard to be what God wanted her to be.

Ginger dabbed at her tears. She wished Uncle Fred would accept her and like her the way she was. She didn't want to be like Candace. God had made her an individual in her own right. According to His Holy Word, the Bible, He had known all about her before she was fully and totally fashioned in her mother's womb. He had created her with features and characteristics uniquely her own. It was one of His myriad hallmarks of excellence and perfection and it was earmarked and designed for her and her alone -- her personality, her two very-deep dimples, (when she smiled, especially) her height, the color and texture of her hair, the fairness of her complexion and the color of her eyes. God had molded and fashioned and designed her in her entirety in such a way that it fit her perfectly and was perfectly and totally becoming to her.

She thought about Sally then. Sally was a classmate at school. She was extremely pretty in her natural way, but was dissatisfied with herself . . . with the way God had created and fashioned her . . . so Sally went about making changes upon herself. She wanted blonde hair, like the popular Nikki in school. If her hair was blonde like Nikki's, she was sure she would be as popular with the boys as Nikki was. With great excitement and eager anticipation, she had a girlfriend try to make her look like Nikki. The result was little less than catastrophic, color-wise. Sally's once beautiful, dark

auburn hair was neither blonde nor auburn but a sickly-looking, very definitely unnatural-looking orange. For days, she remained a recluse in her home, too mortified to be seen on the street. Equally as devastating was the severance of a friendship; Sally became bitter toward her friend, who had merely tried to do what was requested of her.

Seeing that her "blonde" venture was unsuccessful, Sally decided to mimic Nikki as much as possible. She practiced walking and talking like Nikki and even began telling some of the off-color stories and jokes that the popular girl told. As before, the total thing was unsuccessful. The girls snickered and made fun of her behind her back, and the boys, instead of being attracted to her, found her behavior and attitude sickeningly obnoxious and disgusting. Nikki was Nikki and Sally was Sally, no need trying to pretend or be what one was not.

Ginger recalled seeing Sally huddled alone in a seat in the far corner of the lunch room one day at school. She looked desolate and forlorn and bitter. She, Ginger, had gone to her and sat down beside her. "I love you, Sally," she had said with sincerity while tears trickled down her cheeks. "I'm your friend. Will you let me help you?"

Sally had lifted her head until her beautiful dark brown eyes met the blue-green eyes before her. "What's the use?" she had cried. "Nobody likes me. . . ."

"But I do, Sally. I really and truly do. I want to be your friend. . . ."

Sally had eyed her suspiciously for a brief moment. Then she replied quite suddenly, "I believe you, Ginger. Yes, I know you want to be my friend. You . . . you've always been.., well, dare I say, different? You never have made fun of me when I . . . I . . ." Here her voice had broken and Sally began to cry.

Ginger remembered having placed a hand on Sally's arm and saying softly, "You can have a brand new beginning, if you want it."

Sally's eyes were deep pools of searching. "No way will that be possible!" she had exclaimed with remorse. "I made a fool of myself. Nobody needs to tell me. And no one knows it better than I."

"But you can change, Sally. You truly can. What you did was wrong, but you can make up for your foolishness. . . ."

"How?" The dark eyes were sincere and full of longing and probing.

"By getting an inward change first of all."

"Inward change? You . . . you mean getting religion? Like you, Ginger?"

"It's not religion, Sally; it's being converted -- having a heart change, an inside-out change."

Sally was silent for so long that Ginger wondered if she had heard her. After some time, she said, "I've always admired you, Ginny. Very, very much. You're always so natural and naturally sweet." Then, without preamble, she burst out with, "Ginny, have you never wanted to be like someone else? To look like them, to walk and talk like them and . . . and just to be someone else beside yourself?."

"No, Sally, I haven't. At least, not so long as I can remember. Jesus is the only person Whom I want to look like or reflect, but my peers and counter-parts, no."

Tears had come into Sally's dark eyes. "Oh, I do wish I could be like that!" she had cried. "All my life, I've wanted to be accepted, to be loved, and . . . and to be popular. . . ."

It was then that she, Ginger, had talked to Sally about Jesus. She told her how Jesus could change her and her desires and love her with an everlasting and an undying love. "He made you uniquely you, Sally," she had said. "In all this wide, wide world, there is only one you. You have been so very special to God that He gave you a set of fingerprints all your own. No one else has what you have, Sally. Out of His heart of overflowing love and beneficent kindness, He made you and formed you in a way pleasing and honorable and beautiful to Him. You are the only one like you. This is a thrilling thought to me. God made me by His standard of beauty uniquely His own. The same goes for you, Sally."

"I guess I never heard of this before, Ginger. It . . . it's beautiful."

"I feel it's really very wonderful to be me. And talk about an original . . . an exclusive . . . that's each of us; no two exactly alike. This is what helps to make the world an interesting place to live in -- the diversity of people and their personalities and faces and mannerisms. Some mannerisms could well be improved upon, without a doubt, but the mold of God for one's life can never be improved upon. Never! He is all-wise, all-knowing and all-seeing. And to think, that each of us is special to God in the way He made us!"

"O Ginger, you make me feel so ashamed of what I did."

"That isn't my motive, Sally. I just want you to know that God loves you the way you are -- the way He made you, I mean. In fact, He loves you so much that He sent His only Son Jesus to die a shameful death on the cross so that you may be forgiven of all your sins. He made your heart and soul for His spirit to dwell in. This is why you are so dissatisfied; your heart will always have a void in it until you invite the Lord Jesus Christ inside."

Sally's eyes were great, dark pools of sorrow "Then I want Him to come into my heart," she had replied honestly.

And she, Ginger, had prayed with her there in that far corner of the lunch room until Sally was born again From that day on, they became good friends. Sally began going regularly to church and became a real blessing to everybody -- to the young people, especially. She lost sight of Nikki and her popularity in the wonderful love which she discovered and found in Christ. Her spiritual growth and depth was amazingly wonderful and wonderfully amazing.

Ginger dried her tears and sat up. Little matter that she wasn't like her cousin, Candace. God had a very definite and distinct mold for her life and it was completely different from that of her cousin's. Only yesterday, Sally had come to her with happy tears in her eyes, exclaiming joyously, "Oh, Ginny dear, how I do love your Where would I be had you not been you and come to me in love and pity and compassion and shown me what I needed and why I was searching? You're a jewel. Never, never change. I've never been so happy and satisfied in all my life, nor felt so fulfilled. God's mold fits me perfectly."

Ginger thought of others who, in trying to be what they never could or would be, were absolute misfits. There were the students who rebelled

against the "establishment," who rioted, marched and paraded in protest. No mold for them, they declared. But weren't they, in all actuality, still in a mold? It was of a different form, to be sure, but a mold, nonetheless. They escaped one mold only to be molded in a different way, a belligerent and bitter mold of hatred against their superiors and society in general.

Each one is molded in one way or another, Ginger realized. But how one was molded was an individual decision. The mold for the child of God was Jesus Christ and Him alone. Too bad the sinner couldn't realize this, too, she thought. What a lot of trouble and heartache and sorrow he'd save himself by submitting and yielding to God's mold, His "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not."

Her mother's voice was calling to her from the kitchen. "Ginger, it's time to make the biscuits."

"Coming, Mother dear," she replied, hurrying down the hallway to the kitchen.

"I've tried to teach Candace to make good biscuits," Aunt Millie said, smiling at Ginger, "but it's hopeless. I wish she were more like you. She is a lot like you, you know."

Ginger laughed. "Seems like we're pretty much patterned over the same mold," she answered as she sifted flour and baking powder and salt together. "And the best part of all is that each of us is living according to God's mold. We're very much alike but also very much different."

"And that's the way it should be, my dear," Aunt Millie replied softly. "Don't ever change, Ginger. You're a dear, sweet young woman."

"Like our Candace," Uncle Fred added loyally. Ginger rushed to her uncle and threw her arms around his neck. "Candace, especially!" she exclaimed, laughing.