

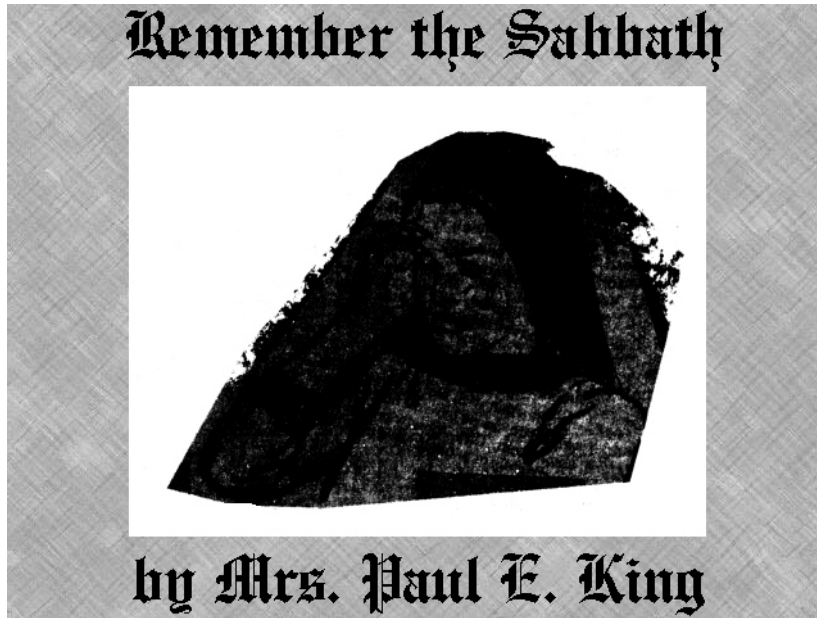
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REMEMBER THE SABBATH
By Mrs. Paul E. King

Becky put the telephone receiver back in place after answering the call and started out to the kitchen, a puzzled look on her face.

"Who was it?" Mitch asked, giving his sister a quick pinch on her arm as he passed her.

Mitch was twelve almost thirteen. If there was one thing he liked to do better than tease and torment his two older sisters, Becky didn't know what it was. Turning quickly, she caught his ear and gave it a testy little tweak, laughing as she said, "Love begets love, my dear little brother. That was merely a love tweak; a love peck."

"I wish you'd learn to be a little more gentle with your love tweaks," Mitch declared, rubbing his ear.

"The better to make you remember," Becky teased, laughing and wrapping her arms around her tow-headed brother's fastly-broadening shoulders. "To further prove my ardent love for a professional little pest that neither Lara Leigh nor I could get along without, nor would we want to, here's a sisterly kiss. With love . . . much love . . . I plant it right on the tip of the prettiest freckled nose in all the world." And Becky kissed her brother on the very tip of his nose. "Light as a feather, Mitch, was that kiss, but it came from my heart."

Mitch struggled to free himself. "That's sissy stuff!" he exclaimed. "Let me go, Becky."

"Okay, my dear brother; I shall let you go. But no more pinches from you." With a little shove, she pushed him away.

"But that was a love pinch of brotherly teasing," Mitch defended. "There's not too much difference between a sisterly 'tweak' and a brotherly pinch; now is there? I think your 'tweak' was harder than my pinch."

"Forgive me, Mitch, if it hurt you; I wouldn't do that willfully nor deliberately for anything in the world. I love you too much. And to prove that I do, I'll kiss your tweaked ear the way Mother and Dad always kissed our hurt knees and our banged up arms and our hurt-hurts that maybe they never could see but that we felt were very real when we were little," and Becky tried to kiss Mitch's ear.

"Nothing doing!" her brother exclaimed, darting away. "That's sissy stuff. That's not for me. Girls! Ugh! They're so mushy!"

"But it worked magically for us when we were little, Mitch. I can remember numbers of times when Mother kissed the hurt away. Daddy, too. It was better than merthiolate; their tender kisses didn't burn and sting like merthiolate did when applied to an open cut or driveway burn from a fall off the bicycle."

"Sure it worked, Becky. Sure! But we were little then. And big men don't go for all this sissy stuff."

Becky turned her back and smiled. Big men! Then, in a more sober expression, she changed the subject with, "You asked me who called. It was Mrs. Bradford."

Mitch looked at his sister. "Whatever did she want? You're baby-sitting for her two children three nights out of the week already; is she wanting you for the other four nights, too? When do those poor children ever have a parents-children night together? I believe I heard you tell Dad and Morn one time that Jeannie Crossover baby-sits three nights for them, too. Right? Is Jeannie quitting?"

"That is correct, Mitch. Six nights out of seven, Sean and Shawna have a baby-sitter: Jeannie and I. Mrs. Bradford had wanted me all six nights, but Mother and Dad and I felt that was too-too often; and too much of a pressure-strain on me, too, with school still in session. So she hired Jeannie for the other three nights."

"Was Jeannie wanting her three nights? Or would she have taken all six if Mrs. Bradford hadn't asked you first?"

Becky laughed. "I doubt that Jeannie would have taken the job at all if Mrs. Bradford had insisted that she take all six nights. It would be a bit difficult for one person to handle those little ones six nights, week in and week out. And, no, Jeannie isn't quitting. Maybe she'd like to sometimes . . ." Her sentence trailed meaningfully.

"I get the picture," Mitch said, sounding really grown up. "But why did she call then? Mrs. Bradford, I mean?"

"She wants me to baby-sit on Sunday night. Imagine that!"

Mitch slapped his hands together loudly. "Can't she stand her children?" he asked suddenly. Then he exclaimed sadly, "Those poor little things. They hardly know they have parents, Becky. Was she angry when you told her you wouldn't baby-sit for her on Sunday?"

"Upset, may fit her reaction or mood more perfectly, Mitch. She was quite upset, yes."

"But she knows you'd never miss church! And she knows you'd never work on Sunday either. Why'd she bother to ask, even?" Mitch was incredulous.

"She offered to pay me double. Said they wanted to go dining with some friends. Now isn't that just like the devil, offering double pay? But there isn't the tiniest pull of want-to even, Mitch."

"I wonder what she'll do. Jeannie won't work on Sunday either. Or will she?"

"It's not ours to worry about, Mitch, so run along and enjoy the beautiful day. Dad and Mother should be home from that farm sale in time for supper. You cleaned the garage and did everything Daddy told you to do?" she asked.

"Go check it, Becky. It's spic and span."

"I trust you, Mitch. You're obedient and reliable. Now run along." Becky gave her brother a gentle little shove.

"What's the matter; don't you like me around? I thought you said you loved me?" he teased.

Becky pointed to the kitchen floor. "See that bucket and the wax, Mitch? I'm going to surprise Mother, Lord willing, and strip the old wax off the floor and put new down. Do you want to help?" She had a mischievous smile on her face.

"No way! Good-bye!" Mitch exclaimed, laughing as he hurried outside to Pal, the German shepherd dog.

Becky had just finished waxing the floor and was washing her hands when the phone rang. It was Jeannie.

"Guess what?" Jeannie asked, and before Becky had time to say anything, she said, "Mrs. Bradford wants me to baby-sit for Sean and Shawna on Sunday! And it's double pay, Beck. Imagine it! I feel that we deserve double pay all week long, though," she stated, laughing. "Those children! Honestly, we earn every penny . . . or should I say dime, and dollar . . . that she pays us. Did you ever see the likes of those two? Mother said she may make me quit; I can't get any studying in at all when I'm there. They're ornery. Period! I wouldn't have done it Sunday at all, but . . . well . . . double pay! Whew!"

Becky said nothing. Her silence prompted Jeannie to say, "What's wrong? You think I shouldn't do it on Sunday; right?"

"What does the Bible say about it?" Becky asked softly.

Jeannie was silent now. Then she said, "But Becky, it's double pay. I need the money. I'm excited about it. Well, take care. I'll see you."

Becky placed the mouthpiece in place; then she hurried to the bathroom to shower. She felt troubled over Jeannie's decision. What would Mrs. Bradford think? she wondered. She knew they both attended the same church. She would just have to transfer the matter over into God's hands, she decided, and leave it with Him. She would not be answering for Jeannie Crossover when she stood before God; she would answer only for Becky, and she meant to keep her own slate spotlessly-clean and white.

Jeannie avoided any contact with Becky when Sunday morning arrived. She even sat in the back row of chairs in their Sunday school class instead of up front between Becky and Lara Leigh as usual. Becky tried to speak to her when church was dismissed, but Jeannie hurried away before her friend could get to her.

It was the wail of the sirens just as church was dismissed that night that sent a dart of fear into Becky's heart.

"Please, Dad," Mitch begged, "can we go? I want to see where it is. If we hurry, we'll be able to follow behind the fire trucks."

Mr. Arbor smiled. Slapping Mitch on his shoulders, he said, "You win, son. I'll take you. They're heading the way we must go home anyway. They may turn off, of course. But we'll see where the fire is."

They followed the fire trucks for five blocks; then the trucks headed toward the elite section of the small city. Mitch spotted the fire before the fire trucks were at the house even. "It . . . it's the Bradford's house!" he exclaimed in horror.

Becky and Lara Leigh, who were not paying attention to where their father was going, now sat on the edge of the car seat. Becky felt the blood drain from her face. She was scared . . . for Jeannie. And for Sean and Shawna, too. One of the children had, no doubt, gotten into the matches again. Sean was bad about this, she knew. Every time she took care of them, she checked, first thing, to make sure the matches were hidden from the little boy's eyes. He had a mania for them, it seemed.

Mr. Arbor parked some distance away, so they would not be in the way of the firemen and their hoses and fire-fighting equipment. Then Becky spotted Jeannie standing along the fence in the back yard. She was crying. Where were the children? she wondered. Without waiting, or saying anything to anyone in the car, she rushed down the street and into the back yard. "Jeannie! Jeannie!" she cried, wrapping her arms around her sobbing friend.

"Oh-h-h, Becky!" was all Jeannie could exclaim as she broke out in fresh sobs.

Becky was crying, too. "It was Sean, wasn't it?" she asked. Then, "Where are they? They're not inside, I hope. If so, we must rescue them. We can't let them die!"

"Mrs. Bradford has them. I called the restaurant as soon as I discovered the smoke coming from the bathroom. Sean locked himself in and wouldn't open for me. He said he was having fun and that no baby-sitter was going to stop him from it this time. Oh, Becky, it was awful. Awful! He wouldn't open the door! And when I called the Bradfords, she said I was overreacting to a child's fun-time."

"Fun time indeed!" Becky remarked. "Sean's mania for matches is fun? How ridiculous! If I told her once, I guess I've told her almost a dozen times or more that Sean has an unnaturally strong desire for playing with matches. She shrugged it off by stating that every child has something they like doing better than some other things and for me not to worry about it. She said he was just going through a phase in little boyhood experimentation. Imagine!"

"But Sean told her that I threw the match into the wastebasket. And . . . I believe Mrs. Bradford believes him." And Jeannie's shoulders shook with sobs. "That's incredulous!"

"She's angry with me, Beck. She said I'm a horrible baby-sitter and she never wants me back again. Oh, why did I desecrate the Sabbath and allow her offer of double pay to tempt me and ensnare me? Why? It doesn't pay. I see it all so clearly now. I am the loser for having gone over God's 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.' One can't violate this and expect to get by without paying the penalty for it. I've told the Lord that I'm sorry I did it, and I asked Him to forgive me, too, and He has. But look at the price I'm paying!"

"Do you need a way home, Jeannie? I'm sure your folks don't know about this. We'll see that you get home. God willing."

"A neighbor said she'd call Daddy and Mother from her house. They're at the hospital with Grandma, who had a stroke. That's why they weren't out to church all day today. Daddy will be coming for me, I'm sure. Thanks much. You're a true friend, Becky. By God's grace and His help, I'm going to pattern my life more like yours."

"Not mine;" Becky replied, "pattern it after the Lord Jesus Christ. He's our Perfect Example. Now come; you're going with me to our car until your father arrives." And she led a contrite Jeannie away from the shooting, licking flames, safely up the street to the car.