

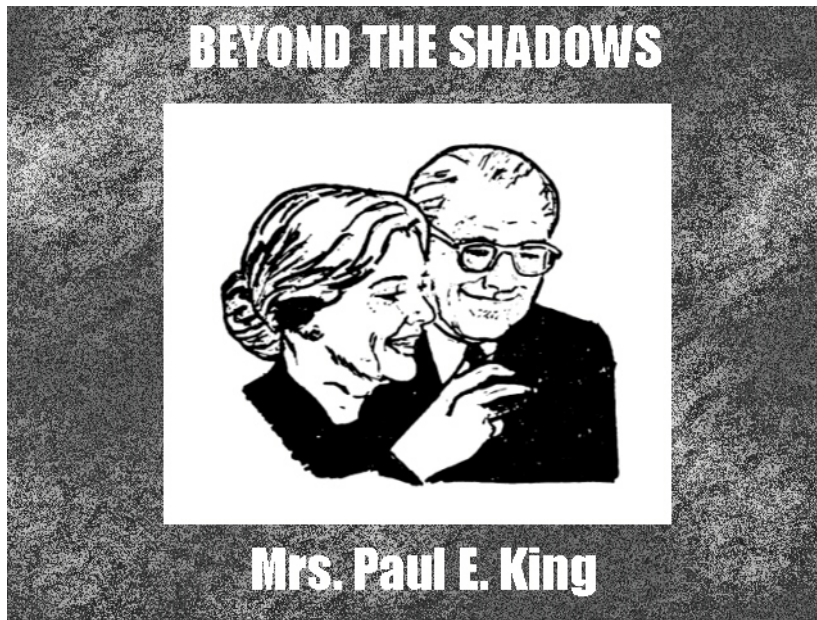
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BEYOND THE SHADOWS
Mrs. Paul E. King

(Chapter 1)

He shifted his backpack and walked on, into the gathering shades of an early winter twilight. He was bone tired; his feet ached, they were sore and cold, partly because of the cold hard fact that there was scarcely any sole left on the beat-up, secondhand boots. He had bought them in a dingy looking

little hole of a place in 'Frisco several weeks back -- paid a mere pittance for them. They had served him well, no complaint there. But he needed another pair. . . .

Steinway -- not his name at all -- plunged his cold, inadequately-gloved hands into his equally worn and thin pants pockets. His hand found the coins in one of the pockets; he rubbed them together fiercely. The two quarters were representative of every cent he possessed. They stood between him and starvation. But he wouldn't spend them! No matter how hungry he was nor how empty his stomach felt. So long as they lay inside his pocket he could proudly and truthfully declare that he wasn't flat broke. His manly pride needed something to keep him afloat -- even if it was a mere two quarters jingling together inside his pockets.

Hattie -- not her real name, either -- had done the job of an expert when she drew the map for him and showed him the best routes to travel, he soliloquized. Looking ahead to the mountains which were slowly coming nearer to him -- or he to them!

Again he shifted the cumbersome backpack then he plunged steadily onward. He should soon be there, he reasoned, if Hattie's map was correct, and he was sure it was. Hattie was a perfectionist; a genius of sorts, in everything she did.

He liked her. Joyce was her real name she'd told him once. Just Joyce, nothing more. No last name. Nothing.

"Remember, I'm Hattie!" she exclaimed. "Joyce is dead; dead to the establishment; dead to her folks; dead to every link of the past."

And he had never questioned her, sensing her distaste and utter disdain for whoever her parents may have been. Someone highly affluent and influential, he'd gathered from the tenor of her tone.

He had first met Hattie at The Gathering, an out of the way place for young transients. Something about the woman drew him to her. She was smart. Brilliant would have been a truer word. He spent many hours with her as she cooked and baked for "the clan."

"Look, Steinway," she told him one day some weeks back, "you don't belong in this group. You're too fine to hang around here, and too young. . ."

"I guess I'm old enough to decide what I want!" he had snapped back. "If you think I'm going out into the horrible old world -- to be thrust into that equally horrible and miserable foster home again -- you have another thought coming: I'm not! I'm fed up with being shifted from one place to another and no one's going to make me go back. No one! Do you hear, Hattie? Not even you!"

He could feel her hand even now, as it had rested on his sandy haired head. Tears glistened brightly in her large round eyes.

"I'm sorry, Steinway." She apologized in a voice full of pathos and tenderness. "I'd be the last person in the world to tell you to go back to the foster home but . . ." here her voice trailed and her eyes became great pools of liquid blue, "please," she pleaded, "take my advice and . . . and leave. It's for your best interest that I ask this. You're so . . . so young. . ."

"Then why are you staying?" he retorted quickly. "Why don't you leave, too?"

A catch came in Hattie's throat. She tried to cover it by turning away and making an insipid excuse but he knew she was struggling for outward composure.

"We'll leave together!" he exclaimed, pressing his claim. "After all, you're old enough to be my mother, and I must confess that you make sense to talk to. You've never made fun of my ideas and suggestions and you don't yell at me like the foster parents did. Oh, I'm sure I deserved some of what I got, but. . ."

"I think you have some wonderful ideas and suggestions, Steinway," Hattie had interrupted defensively. "No boy living has the insight and brains of a full-grown man. Keep dreaming, my boy, someday you'll make good. But first, you'll have to be emptied of the bitterness that's in your soul. Bitterness is a lethal thing: it destroys one's dreams; his hopes and ambitions, too. I want you to leave . . ."

"No! No! No! You can't push me out. . ."

"Who's pushing you, Steinway? It's just that you don't belong here. There are better things than this for you."

"But I'm not doing anything wrong. And I've contributed my share of grocery money by working as a stock boy in Super-Value . . ."

"You've kept up your share of the load like a man, Steinway, and I'm proud of you; but I insist that you leave. Here, take this and leave," and Hattie had thrust the carefully detailed paper into his hand.

He stood, speechless and shocked, then turned and fled to his room at the far end of the big house. For the first time in years, he wept brokenly. How could he leave Hattie? She was more of a mother to him than any person he had ever known. But now . . . now . . . she insisted that he leave.

And like an obedient son, he had taken her advice and left. Why? he wondered now, as he drew nearer and nearer to his destination. What made him so willing -almost eager -- to leave and fulfill her wish? her request?

"They'll treat you kindly, dear boy," she promised, as he started on his long, long journey.

A dim light came suddenly into sharp focus now and the boy's heart hammered fiercely. The light!

Hattie had said he'd see the light from the lamp post when he reached this certain bend in the road. And she was right! That was the farm. He was almost home. Home! How dare he be so presumptuous? The people may drive him away . . . hate him even.

"No! No!" he cried aloud into his hands. "Oh, God, if you care about me, please, make the Randalls willing to take me in. Hattie said they'd be kind to me . . . please, God . . ."

He quickened his steps now. Why hadn't he asked Hattie how she knew about these Randall people? he wondered quickly feeling suddenly very nervous and shy. Strange, indeed, that he hadn't thought to question her about the place to which he was going.

A dog barked loudly as he opened the gate and started down the pathway toward the kitchen. He froze in his tracks, then slowly he began backing out the way he'd come in.

The kitchen door flew open suddenly and a man's kindly voice spoke softly, "Here Oliver, Come here, boy. It's quite all right now, young man," he said, motioning for Steinway to come up to the porch. "Oliver won't hurt you while I'm here."

Trembling with fright and from the cold, the boy stepped up beside the man.

"Where did you come from, Son? And whatever brings you out on a cold night like this? Come inside; you're bound to be hungry. Mother . . ." he called, drawing Steinway into the warm kitchen after him. "We have company for supper." He made the announcement proudly, ceasing his flow of words long enough to look Steinway over from head to foot. "What's your name?" he asked.

"Steinway."

"Steinway what?"

"Just Steinway . . ."

"I'm John Randall and this is my wife, Lois Randall. Now, you say you're Steinway . . . what's your last name?"

The boy's gaze fell under the probing, penetrating eyes of the kind Mr. Randall. His eyelashes fluttered nervously.

"Let me help you get that heavy pack off your shoulders," John Randall said, unfastening the straps and dropping the cumbersome thing to the floor. "You can think better now, with all that weight gone," he said, laughing lightly and slapping Steinway on his shoulders in a manly way. "Where'd you come from?" he asked gently.

Without meaning to or really knowing why he did it, the boy laid bare his heart to the man and the woman. It was as though it was the only

sensible thing to do-the right thing. When he finished, tears glistened in the couple's kindly eyes.

"Then you're not Steinway at all?" John Randall queried softly.

"No, I'm not. That was my 'other' name -- my fictitious name. I've been called Sam, or Sammy, all my life, by my many different foster parents."

"Sam . . . Sammy. . . .That would mean, no doubt, that your real name is Samuel. Samuel what?"

"I've always gone by Samuel Woodcock in school, but my last two foster parents said my name was Wooster, or something like that. But I didn't believe them. They said so many things that weren't true. I believed what Hattie said, though . . ."

"Who is Hattie? Another of your foster parents?"

"Not really. But I found it easiest of all to talk to her and to obey her. She was like a mother to me -- so kind and good and compassionate."

"Do you have a place to stay tonight?" Mr. Randall asked suddenly.

"No, Sir."

"Would you like to stay with us? We have plenty of room in the house. .
."

"Oh, Sir, I would be most grateful. But you won't report me to any of the authorities, will you? I don't want to go back to those foster homes. Please!"

"You will be safe here. Now run along to the bathroom at the end of the kitchen and wash up. Supper's waiting. I just got through with the milking and mother doesn't like to keep hot foods waiting too long: it destroys that delightful fresh taste, you know," the man of the house explained, giving him a gentle shove toward the bathroom and adding tenderly, "Come out as soon as you're ready, Sam."

In spite of his bravery, the boy wept once the bathroom door was shut.

Seeing himself in the mirror, a feeling of shame and uncleanness swept over him. He couldn't go to the Randalls' table looking like the bum he felt he was. He couldn't! There was something clean and awesome about the couple. Something . . . dare he say the word? . . . holy!

"Ready, Sam?"

Mr. Randall startled him.

Opening the door, he stood framed in the doorway. His head was bowed. "I . . . I can't come to your table, Sir. I . . . look . . . like a tramp. Excuse me, please. Maybe, after you have eaten, you will cut my hair and . . . and find a razor for me so I can . . . shave . . ."

"Gladly; but first, you eat. You look famished. I know a hungry boy when I see one. Scrub your face and hands; get them clean, and use the comb that's on the sink top then come to supper. You'll never forget Lois' cooking once you've tasted it. She's the best cook in the valley . . . loved feeding our seven children."

And John Randall's statement was true, as Sam found out when he tasted only the first few bites of delicious food on the table.

"I'll help with the dishes," he volunteered, as Mrs. Randall began clearing the table when each had eaten to his fill. "I used to help Hattie. . ."

"This Hattie . . . she must have been quite a woman!" Mrs. Randall exclaimed.

"Oh, she was. She was! She's a brilliant woman. She told me to come here . . . said you'd be good to me. I never thought to ask her how she knew you nor. . ."

"Was she an elderly woman, Sammy?" Sammy! Mrs. Randall had said his name in such a motherly way! Sammy! Tears washed the round blue eyes.

"How old would you judge Hattie to have been?" Lois Randall asked gently.

"Not ancient; but old enough to be my mother. And she was kind to me like a mother should be."

Was her name actually Hattie, Sammy? Maybe Hattie was fictitious, too?"

Sam gulped. Dare he tell? Dare he? But then, he hadn't promised that he wouldn't tell.

"Hattie was her 'other' name," he said. "Her real name was Joyce."

"Joyce? That's a pretty name. Did she tell you her real last name?"

"No. Just Joyce; and this was a slip of the tongue, she said."

A tear slid from the corner of Mrs. Randall's eye but Sam didn't notice for John Randall came into the kitchen just then with a pair of hair clippers and a shaving kit.

"I'm ready for my first customer," he announced jovially wielding the scissors and clippers above his head. "Follow me to the back entranceway, Sam my boy. Ah, it will be like old times again, cutting hair; like when I used to cut the boys' hair. Had four heads to keep in shape. They're grown now, but I'm sure I haven't forgotten how to make a boy look like a man

By the time John Randall got through with Sam, the boy hardly recognized himself. He looked different -clean-different and something, somewhere inside his being felt different. A great part of his self-assertiveness and belligerence seemed to have taken wings and fled, in cowardice, from him. He looked like a man, and something deep within him made him suddenly want to act like a man . . . a noble man, like John Randall.

"Th . . . thanks, Mr. Randall. Th . . . thanks," he stuttered, his voice breaking with emotion. Reaching quickly into his pocket he brought forth the precious coins. "Here, take these as part payment for the hair cut and for the best meal I've had in weeks. "I'll work the rest off if you'll tell me what you want done. I'm not a 'sponger,' Mr. Randall, neither am I lazy. I'm willing to help in any way possible . . ."

John Randall's hand came down upon Sam's shoulder in another warm pat. "I think I know a good boy when I meet him," he complimented, "and since you don't have a home to go to, Lois and I would be delighted to have you remain here with us. For awhile, at least. I could use a good farm hand. How does that sound?"

For answer, Sam bowed his head and wept. "It . . . it's wonderful, Sir! Wonderful! Hattie was right! She was! 'They'll treat you kindly,' she said. Oh, Mr. Randall, I wish you could meet Hattie. She . . . reminds me of . . . you and . . . and Mrs. Randall."

"Perhaps someday we shall meet her, Sam. Yes, maybe someday. But come, you must be bone weary; a comfortable bed awaits you as soon as you've had a bath," and John Randall led the way up the stairs to a cozy bedroom nearby.

"Your pajamas," he said, pointing to the nightclothes Lois had brought out of the trunk and laid across the bed. "And some clean, fresh clothes for tomorrow when you arise, Lord willing. They belonged to our Paul before he outgrew them -- around the waist and through the chest and shoulders. Look like they'll be a perfect fit. Until tomorrow, goodnight son. Family worship's at 7:30, then breakfast. Mind if I pray with you now? We always prayed with the children before they retired for the night . . ."

When, finally, the boy lay between the crisp, fresh, clean sheets in the lovely old-fashioned bedroom -- clean scrubbed from the top of his head to the soles of his feet -- a strange new feeling possessed him. It was an inner feeling, like he needed to have something inside his heart made as clean -- or cleaner, even! -- as his body was now clean.

Tears glistened in his eyes and hung on his long eyelashes "God," he prayed haltingly, "thank you for having them keep me. Now hear me again . . . I need cleaned up on the inside; do whatever needs done. . . ."

It was a simple prayer, the best he knew how to pray, but Sam Woodcock's soul was washed in the Blood of Calvary's Lamb and he knew it. He didn't know what to call it but he knew his heart had a supernatural washing.

Thanking God, he rolled over and was soon sleeping soundly.

Downstairs, between tears, the Randalls talked in quiet tones.

"Oh, John, it . . . it's her boy! He looks like her! Didn't you notice? Especially after you cut his hair and shaved him. . . ."

"Yes. Yes, my dear. I . . . noticed. God is answering prayer. Bless His name! Now, shall we go to bed? He still has full control; Everything's in His hands . . ."

With a quiet, calm assurance, the Randalls walked hand in hand to their bedroom at the far end of the upstairs hallway.

(Chapter 2)

A cold looking winter sun was sending shafts of light through the windows when Sam awoke the following morning. Where was he? he wondered, and what time was it?

For a brief moment the boy was confused; then it dawned on him, clear and bright as the morning sunlight: he was among friends; among "love personified" -- in and through the lives of the Randalls.

Throwing the covers back, Sam jumped out of bed and hurried to the window. Mr. Randall had said he could use some help on the farm, he must not oversleep. Never! Not if he wanted to remain here (and he did). Oh, he did! Hattie was right, the Randalls were wonderful people!

Lifting a deep ruffle of the homemade unbleached muslin curtains, Sam peered out through the window. The landscape was white-white. It snowed while he slept. The earth glistened and sparkled and shone in brilliant splendor as the sun's rays caught the flakes of crystalline snow and transformed everything into a veritable winter wonderland, making it a thing of scintillating beauty.

A sigh of contentment escaped his lips and a warm feeling enveloped him. He ran his fingers through his silky hair, newlycut and freshly shampooed the previous night. The earth resembled his heart -- his person -- he thought: It was clean and white, like his heart was, and his body as well.

He walked to the mirror and looked at himself, marveling at the transformation in the image reflected back to him. "You're new, Sam!" he exclaimed softly aloud. "From the inside out, you're all new and . . . different. Oh, it's wonderful. Wonderful!"

Salty tears slid out of his eyes and did a merry dance down his cheeks as he dressed in the clothes the Randalls had given him (they were a perfect fit, he noticed) then he made the bed, smoothing the sheet -- the covers -- and pulling the spread gently upward and folding it neatly over the pillows.

He stood back to survey the room -- his room -- and his eyes fell upon the Book. It was old and worn and much-used, he noticed as he picked it up and opened it at random, feeling a sense of awe and wonder sweep over him at holding the sacred, Holy Word in his hands. How some of the "clan" would laugh at him -- mock him even -- could they see him now, bathed, clean-shaven, with a real man's dignified hair cut, holding a Bible in his hands in preparation of reading it for his own benefit. Yes, they would laugh! But not Hattie. Ah, no; somewhere, sometime, Hattie'd known better days. . . .

Sam's eyes opened wide in amazement as John 15:16 stood out before him in bold lettering: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you."

Ignorant though he was in the Word of God, he knew -- knew, knew! -- it was the Lord Himself who had spoken those words. It was as though they had been written for him alone. Waves of heavenly joy and glory surged through his soul and happy tears fell to the floor.

"It's true!" he cried aloud. "O God, it's true: You chose me; You called me! Thank you. O I love you."

It was one of his first conversations with the personal God whom he had come to know and love the previous night. He was chosen -- called out -- by Jesus Himself. What a wonderful new life, he thought happily: The Bible had a real-life message as direct and as personal as a telegram! More so, even!

He read on, discovering that "his" verse had much in it. God had chosen him for a purpose: He had a design for his life. "I have . . . ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain."

A thrill of excitement raced through his body. God had chosen him and He had his life all planned out for him. Suddenly he knew why he was born; the question marks were banished and gone forever: God had wanted him here; He had chosen him to, "go and bring forth fruit."

All the hurt and disappointments of his unhappy childhood seemed as nothing in the light of this new and heavenly revelation. Now -- Now! he had a purpose for living; a purpose for being! He was important to God! and God expected him, Samuel Woodcock, to go and produce something worthwhile and lasting.

Sam fell to his knees and prayed, earnestly so, amazed how easy it was to talk to the One who had saved his soul and brought meaning and purpose to his life.

With the blessed thought in his heart that he was "special" to God, the boy hurried down stairs sometime later.

He greeted Mrs. Randall with a joyous, "Good morning. I'm saved," smiling broadly and standing beside her as she worked at the stove.

The cheerful woman turned and as tears fell from her eyes she said softly, "Blessed be the name of the Lord! We knew you were going to get saved, Sammy."

Sammy! How sweet it sounded coming from Mrs. Randall's dear lips! "Did God tell you!" he asked quickly.

"He gave us the assurance, dear boy," Mr. Randall answered, coming through the parlor doorway.

Without hesitation, Sam related what God had done for his heart when he prayed before retiring for the night, adding the story of "his" verse and the meaning and revelation of it to his heart. "I feel like I've come out of the shadows of darkest night into glorious sunlight," he said. "My heart is unchained: I'm free from sin and its blighting habits. Oh, I wish I could tell Hattie; she needs to know that God has a purpose for her life, too."

"Could you write her perhaps? Mr. Randall asked gently as they sat down to breakfast.

"I wish I could. But it wouldn't do any good: mail's a part of the 'establishment,' and the others would resent it and make it hard on Hattie."

There was a long silence, then suddenly Sam spoke again. His eyes were bright with hope: "You know something!" he said, more as an exclamation than a question. "Hattie doesn't belong there; no more than I did. She doesn't believe in the things that bunch is doing and she keeps to herself and. . ."

"Then why would she be with them?" Mrs. Randall asked gently, passing the hot biscuits and ham to Sam. "You know what I really think?" The pair shook their heads.

"I think Hattie's just hiding. She doesn't want somebody to know where she is. She works hard, does all the cooking and what cleaning the 'clan' allows her to do. They're dirty, mostly. But not Hattie: her room and kitchen were always clean and neat. Oh, I wish I could contact her. She needs to know that God is seeking her!"

"We can pray, Sam," Mr. Randall said with a catch in his voice. "God can work as we pray. Prayer's a mighty force and a powerful weapon."

A look of wonder and awe filled the new convert's eyes. "Then I shall not give God peace or rest until I know that Hattie has found Him. I am ordained of God to 'go and bring forth fruit.'"

"Why not call her Joyce, dear boy?" Mr. Randall said kindly. "You said she admitted that Joyce was her real name . . ."

"But that was a slip on the tongue on her part, Mr. Randall."

"I would prefer that you call her by her real name, son."

"Very well, I will; Joyce, it shall be." Sam conceded willingly, wondering why the preference but saying nothing about it.

Family worship was of especial delight and joy to the young man, who was afforded the honor of reading the Scripture for the morning devotions by John Randall, and when he walked side by side to the barn with his kind

benefactor, Sam's eyes brimmed over with happy tears. This feeling of being loved and wanted and accepted was beyond anything he had ever experienced. He would prove his own worth to the Randalls. Yes he would! Perhaps they would want him to stay with them forever.

Sam was a diligent worker and an eager learner, quickly acquiring the skill of milking and the many varied jobs needing done around the barn, the hog pens and chicken houses, and taking sheer delight in the mere fact that he was able to work as man to man along side the kindly John Randall.

The weeks that followed found Sam seated between the kindly couple in church each prayer meeting night and every Sunday. Through the preached word, thundered mightily and uncompromisingly from the pulpit, and because of the godly, exemplary lives of the Randalls, the young man's inner being hungered and thirsted after Holiness of heart. He became a diligent seeker and was soon a happy finder: his heart was made perfect in Love -- Divine Love He was "endued with power from on high."

Determined to prove Matt. 11:12 to its fullest, to plummet it to its very depth, Sam increased his praying for the woman, Joyce, quoting over and over, ". . . the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." He claimed the promise and stood, unmoved and undaunted by outward circumstances, upon the solidarity of it.

May came and went, still the young man remained with the Randalls. "We want you to stay with us for always, Sam," they had said. "You belong here. . . ."

Thinking back to that statement now, as he went about the barn chores, Sam felt like he did belong here. It was a sort of kinship feeling and he got a warm sensation every time he thought about it.

Coming in from the hay field one beautiful day in mid-June, Sam noticed an out-of-state automobile parked in the driveway near the farmhouse. The car was neither new nor shiny looking but it appeared utterly and totally durable. Who could it be? the boy wondered as he walked beside John Randall to the kitchen.

Stepping inside the door, Sam's mouth opened wide in glad surprise.

"Joyce! Joyce!" he cried aloud. "I've been praying for you! I wanted you to come here. They're kind. Joyce. They're everything and more, that you told me they'd be. . . ."

"Sa . . . Sammy!"

The woman, slightly grayer than when he'd left her, stared long at the boy-man. His features were different, she noticed. He was different -- from the inside out, he was different. Not only was he ruddy looking and healthy, he'd had an inward change. She bowed her head and wept.

"Joyce! Joyce!" Sam's voice shook with emotion.

"You may call her 'Mother,' dear boy," John Randall said brokenly, drawing Sam close to his manly side. "Mo . . . Mother?"

Lifting her head, Joyce smiled through her tears. "Yes, son, I am your mother, and it was no mere chance of fate that led you my way in California: God's hand was in it all."

"But . . . why didn't you tell me? the boy asked, feeling dazed and confused.

"Because I wanted to be sure. Everything's cleared now and we can begin to lead a normal mother-child relationship. First, meet your Great Uncle John and Great Aunt Lois. My mother and Aunt Lois were sisters . . . only, my folks weren't Christians like Uncle John and Aunt Lois are."

Sam's eyes grew misty with tears. "Mother!" he exclaimed almost breathlessly. "I knew you were different: you always understood me and tried to help me. But where's my father?" he asked quickly.

Joyce dropped her eyes to the floor. "He deserted us both," she said softly. "When I was forced to put you in a foster home -- due to lack of support for you -- I grew bitter and resentful."

"But . . . my grandparents? They would have helped, wouldn't they? After all, Uncle John and Aunt Lois are so very kind . . ."

Joyce looked with imploring eyes to the Randalls. "Tell him," she said to her uncle

"Your grandparents were strongly opposed to your father's and mother's marriage, Sam. They preferred that Joyce -- your mother, would marry into wealth, like they were. Sam -- your father's name also -- was a fine young man, with great potential for good. He loved your mother and you; I know he did . . . still does, I'm sure.

"Then why. . .?"

It was Aunt Lois' turn to speak now. "My sister's a very proud woman, Sammy," she said softly. "She brought about the estrangement in your family. But, look, God has answered one prayer for us, He'll answer another! This one, for your father. We must not discuss people in a detrimental way; it is not Christ-like. Furthermore, someday God will bring your dear grandmother and grandfather to Himself. He has ways and means which we can't imagine. Now, shall we eat? Dinner's growing cold, and since you will have the big south bedroom, Joyce, and you'll be living right here with Sam and Uncle John and me until your Sam humbles himself and comes back to you. Well, there'll be plenty of time for visiting and talking."

"Shall we join hands and pray?" Uncle John said in a broken, hoarse whisper.

Joyce reached over and found her son's hand. In true motherly fashion, she clasped it tightly in her own small hand. Tears flowed freely down her cheeks.

A surge of joy rolled over Sam's soul. Hadn't he always wanted to call Joyce "Mother"? He had nothing tangible then upon which to base his thinking and his desire, but now he did. Ah, yes, he did!

He caressed the small hand lovingly. Tenderly. Soon, yes very soon his mother would come out of the shadows into the glorious light of the gospel and God's love!

(The End)