

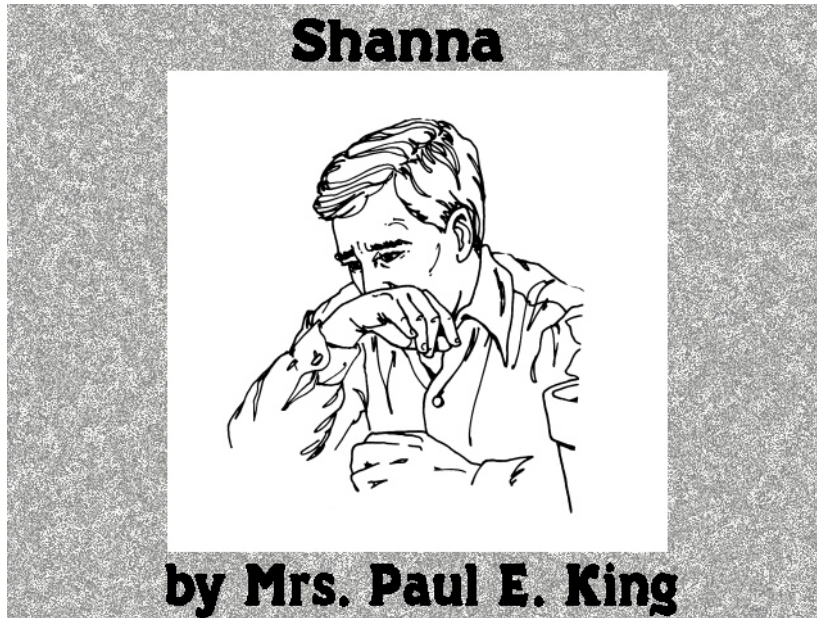
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**SHANNA**  
**By Mrs. Paul E. King**

Josh turned the car into the driveway, anxious and happy to be home. But sad, too. Lately, Shanna had seemed to have locked herself behind a wall which he couldn't unlock nor penetrate or break through. He had tried everything he knew to reach through to her but to no avail.

"O God!" he cried aloud now as he drove into the garage and shut the car's motor off. "Help me, please. I have no other help, dear Lord. None whatever. And You said for me to call upon Thee in the day of trouble and Thou wouldst answer me and deliver me. Help Shanna to see that I want only what is best for her. Please, someway, somehow, send help from above."

He sat behind the steering wheel for a long while, praying and meditating, wondering what more to do; which direction to go now with Shanna. It was so hard, being both father and mother. It didn't use to be; lately, however, things had changed.

Josh leaned his head on the steering wheel and wept. Again he prayed: "Lord, You know I can't allow her to go out with Art Rothmore. He isn't a Christian. And Lord, he . . . he's been ticketed for driving while under the influence of liquor. O God, help me! Help my daughter! Remove this . . . this temptation. . . ."

Josh thought back across the years to the date of Shanna's birth. He had dedicated her to the Lord then; all alone, he had stood in front of the church altar, her cradled in his arms. His wife, having backslid shortly after their marriage, refused to have any part in the dedication of their tiny infant. And three years later, on the pretense of going shopping, she had left him to rear their only child alone.

He remembered how he had sat up that night waiting for his wife to return. When the hands of the clock reached eleven, he knew something had happened.

Like one nearly frantic with fear, he paced back and forth in the house, going from the kitchen into the living room and then into the bedrooms. It was on his second trip into Shanna's room that he saw the note propped up against the little light on the dresser. His heart nearly died within him as he read it. Jan was gone! Forever! She had told him that she wanted no part in raising children; said she wanted to be "free." Shanna would be his forever, she said, with no interference from her at any time. She had "found someone else. Goodbye."

That was thirteen years ago, Josh recalled now. He had had no word from her in all of those years and no inquiry from her concerning their child, Shanna.

God had helped him wondrously in caring for and raising Shanna. Their bond of affection had increased yearly and, until recently, Shanna had never given him any heartache or worries whatever. But that was before Art Rothmore had entered the picture, he remembered now.

Art was the heart throb of a host of girls. Tall, athletic, handsome, dark haired and almost always sun bronzed like copper, he had his pick of the female" availables." Girls all but swooned over him. He had the sportiest of sports cars and he knew how to sweet-talk his way into the heart of any girl he chose to have.

He had never bothered with Shanna until recently. And that's when Josh "sat up" and took a long and good look at his daughter. What he saw was quite a revelation to him: Shanna was no longer a little girl with sweeping straw-colored hair falling down her back and shoulders in long, graceful curls; she was, instead, a strikingly-beautiful young woman with a dignity and poise and grace that positively astonished and astounded him. He had been so busy with necessary work that he had failed to notice these things previously.

But Art had not been too busy to notice; oh, no. He had not only noticed but he had proceeded immediately to action, asking Shanna to go out with him. But Josh knew Art's kind.

He recalled the time Shanna came to him asking if she could go for a ride with Art in his sports car. He had thought it must be some other Art, so in pure innocence, he had questioned, "Art who?"

When Shanna told him it was Art Rothmore he could scarcely believe he had heard correctly. After a while, he said (softly and kindly), "No, dear child. No. Art isn't a Christian."

"But Daddy, it's only for a ride in his car," his daughter had said, looking at him with large questioning eyes; eyes that seemed to be saying or asking what could possibly be so wrong just to go for a ride.

He had to take his stand, firmly but kindly. He knew Art's kind. How well he knew!

But Art had refused to take no for an answer; relentlessly, he pursued Shanna. The more she refused, so much more intense his pursuing seemed to be. He was determined that Shanna would date him. The other fair young women who were easy prey for his inflated egotism seemed as scum in comparison to Shanna. And then he, Josh, had told her that, once and for all, she must tell him that her no must mean no. And that's when the wall was built. Shanna seemed like a forlorn little creature behind and inside of the invisible barrier.

"Please, kind Father," he cried aloud once more, "show me what to do; how to handle this. I'm afraid I'm not doing something just right, after all, she is a girl. Maybe I don't understand her, dear Lord. So help me. Give me Thy wisdom in dealing with this daughter whom Thou hast given to me. And Father, help Shanna to see for herself that Thy Word dare never be compromised. . . ."

He felt relieved after he prayed, like God had heard his plea for help and was going to answer.

With a lighter heart, he walked in through the kitchen door, calling, "Shanna, I'm home. How are you this fine evening?"

Shanna came from her room into the kitchen, saying quietly, "Hi, Daddy. Supper's ready."

"How'd your day go?" Josh asked, trying to make conversation.

"Like always," came the unemotional reply as Shanna dished up the supper.

"How was school, honey?"

"The same as always."

Josh felt his heart sink. Faith, however, grabbed hold of the sinking feeling and shook it completely out of him as, silently, he quoted one faith-restoring promise after the other.

The phone rang. Josh answered the ring with a cheerful, "Hello, Josh Farmer here."

He heard what sounded like a heavy sigh of disgust, then the mouthpiece was slammed down angrily into the receiver.

"For some reason, somebody wasn't too happy about something," Josh said as he seated himself at the table. He wondered if the caller hadn't been Art.

Shanna looked at him with innocent eyes, wondering whom the caller could have been and what he wanted.

"You ask the blessing tonight, Shanna," Josh said kindly.

"Bu . . . but Daddy, you.., you always ask the blessing over our evening meal."

"I know, honey. But tonight I want you to pray." Shanna felt a knot come into her throat. She closed her eyes and bowed her head. "I . . . I can't do it, Daddy," she cried.

"Why not, dear girl?"

She took a long, deep breath; tears shimmered in her eyes. "I . . . I just can't," she answered in a barely audible voice.

"Why can't you, Shanna? Praying used to be as natural to you as breathing. What broke the connection? God hasn't changed, honey. . . ." Josh allowed his sentence to trail meaningfully. "I . . . I know God hasn't changed," Shanna began, tearfully and brokenly. "It . . . It's just that I . . . well, I . . . I've felt badly toward you, Daddy. You . . . you're so strict with me."

"Because I refuse to allow you to go out with Art? Is this what you mean by saying I am 'strict,' Shanna?"

"Yes. I'm sixteen," she said quickly.

"And you think I should allow you to go out with whomever you choose; is that it, Shanna?"

"Well . . . not exactly. But to go for a drive with Art, or out for a hamburger, I . . . I . . . can't see how that would hurt anybody. And . . . and . . . Father, I . . . I'm not a child anymore."

"I know this. Art knows this, too. But Shanna, what would you think of me if I said yes to your request and then, hours later, you came home with your life ruined and defiled and you were left with years and years of remorse and shame and suffering? I wouldn't be a loving parent if I were to cater to this whim of yours, would I?"

"Art seems gentlemanly and nice to me."

Josh studied Shanna's face for a long while; innocence and naivete were earmarked indelibly upon each and every feature, he noticed. For this he was thankful. Sin had not taken these wonderful virtues away from her, and by God's grace, and with every ounce and strength and power and courage that he could muster, he -- Josh -- would work earnestly and diligently and prayerfully toward keeping it this way for Shanna until the day when God would send some spiritual, Spirit-filled and noble young man along for her. Then he would relinquish her to the care and love of her God-sent mate with an overflowing heart, knowing she had not been pawed over and handled and was not defiled by the Art Rothmores of this world.

"Art has a bad reputation, my dear." Josh ventured the statement carefully. "And I'm not one who listens to or believes in idle tales and gossip, as you so well know, Shanna. Several girls had to drop out of school because of him. How do I know? Their fathers and I work together."

Shanna gave a little gasp.

"I love you too much to allow this to happen to you. As your father, it is my duty to protect you and guide you aright. Love must sometimes be tough and say no. Art sees your innocence; it appeals to him. Remember the story of Tamar in the Bible?" Shanna nodded.

"Art is much like Amnon in the Bible. Now, will you ask the blessing, dear child?"

Haltingly, Shanna began. Then, in a mighty deluge of sobbing and tears, she opened her heart to the Lord, asking His forgiveness for her wrong attitude toward her father and imploring God to restore the peace and the joy which she once knew and enjoyed.

The evening meal turned into a revival and a camp meeting. The supper was cold but Shanna's heart was warm and tender and filled with the peace of God which passeth all understanding. The wall tumbled down with her shout of victory. The channels were open again -- to Heaven, and between her father and herself.

"Oh, Daddy," she cried, "I'm so sorry I allowed wrong thoughts and a wrong attitude to come into my heart. Forgive me, please. Art influenced me wrongly. He said you were being too strict with me, and that he would never 'knuckle' down to his parents. That's the word he used for being submissive. He said I needed to stand up for my rights. Oh, Daddy, I was so foolish to even stop long enough to lend him a listening ear. He was trying to instill rebellion in me; rebellion toward you. I see it so clearly and plainly now. I'm so very sorry. It will never happen again, I promise. I'm going through with Jesus whatever the cost. I love the Lord, and Daddy, I love you. So very much. You have been the best father in all the world. Thanks for saying no to me. I feel secure and safe under your guidance and headship."

"Like our Heavenly Father who wants only what's best for His children, so I am with you, Shanna. And now, perhaps we'd better be eating. Terry Martin should be calling you soon. He came by where I work today and asked if he could take you with him to the church zone rally on Friday night, the Lord willing."

"Really?" Shanna asked. "May I go, Father?"

"I told him he'd have to ask you, and if you wanted to go this would be fine with me. Terry's a fine Christian. So, if you'd like, you may go."

"Really, Father!" Shanna exclaimed, smiling broadly. "Terry's one of the greatest! But I never thought he'd ask me anywhere. Oh, Daddy, thank you! Thank you!" And Shanna rushed over and threw her arms around her father's neck just as the phone rang.

"I'll get it, Daddy," she remarked, laughing as she hurried over to the phone.

Josh bowed his head and thanked the Lord for answering prayer. Then, brushing tears off his cheeks, he began to eat.