NEW GIRL
By Mrs. Paul E. King

She was different. Kyle and I noticed it instantly when we saw her for the first time as she stepped inside the wheezing, rattling school bus.

"Hey, she's cute! Beautiful!"
Kyle whispered it so loudly in my ear that I was embarrassed. I was afraid that any minute he'd let out a loud "wolf" whistle.

"Sh! Sh-h!" I hushed. "Don't be so loud."

Kyle either ignored my subdued warning or either he didn't care if she heard. His eyes seemed glued to the tall, statuesque, blonde-haired, blue-eyed, figure who walked with dignity and serenity down the aisle of the bus and found a seat two seats in front of us.

"Wow!" Kyle exclaimed, far more loudly than he meant to, I was sure.

"Kyle!" I chided sisterly. "Please remember your manners. And don't forget that Father and Mother have taught us how to be respectful of others. Her feelings, Kyle! I'm sure she overheard that exclamation of yours. Now pull yourself together and act like a gentleman or I'll find a seat elsewhere."

Kyle looked at me enigmatically for a brief moment, sighed, then settled back against the seat, his eyes, all the while staring at the silken-haired girl in front of us as though she was an apparition and not real at all.

I, too, settled back against the seat, wondering how I had failed to know that a new family would be moving into our community since Janene Longmier usually knew who was moving in or out and where they were moving to or coming from; who was the best this or that; who was having a party or gathering; whose relatives were coming to visit whom and where they were coming from. Such kind of things. She kept me informed.

Janene and I were best friends. She was the editor of our school paper, Thrush Valley High News. Quite naturally, then, Janene was always on the lookout and at the listening post for news which she thought would be of interest to the students and faculty of Thrush Valley High.

She was a super editor, planning to major in journalism in college upon graduation from our high school. She collected bits of interesting data and news all year long and printed it for us to read, keeping us well informed even during the summer months. Thrush Valley High News was noted for its excellence and superior quality. I was proud to say Janene was my friend. My best friend, really.
But how did Janene ever slip up on this bit of information? A new family moving into our community and Janene not knowing about it seemed absolutely incredulous. Always, someone told Janene this kind of news, and, competent future editor that she hoped and planned to be, she checked out each bit of information given to her then printed it for us to read.

As Kyle sat staring, I sat thinking, wondering how the slip-up had happened.

The bus came to a grinding, wheezing halt and its doors opened to admit Wes Mower and his sister Twila. He got on in his usual jolly manner, laughing and calling to Alan Aikley near the back of the bus.

Wes started down the aisle of the bus toward Alan, his face one big happy looking smile and his eyes dancing with merriment. He was almost even with Kyle and me when he wheeled around and took a long look at the new girl in front of us. Then, in complete silence, he turned and hurried towards the back of the bus.

I could scarcely wait till I found Janene when I got off the bus at school.

"How come you didn't print it?" I asked when I saw her as we walked together from the foyer to our home room.

Janene turned and looked at me in surprise. "Print what, Rachael? I don't understand," she said.

"The new girl is positively beautiful!" I exclaimed. "She's . . . well . . . there's something different about her. Where did she come from? And what grade is she in? If she's in any of my brother's classes he'll be making all D's. Or F's, even. He flipped over her. What's her name? Even jolly, happy-go-lucky Wes had a sudden, radical change come over him when he got a good look at her. He was perfectly silent all the way to school. So why didn't you let us know?"

"Honestly, Rachael," Janene replied, "you must believe me; I don't know what you're talking about. Where is this breathtaking beauty? Let's go find her. I can't allow this to go unprinted. . . ."
"We don't have time to go looking, Janene. See the hands of the hallway clock?"

"But I'm an editor; I can't allow this to happen. People expect me to keep them informed. I have no idea how this could have happened. Why I . . . I . . . Are you coming with me?" she asked.

"We'll be late for class, Janene," I warned her. "No, I must not be tardy. My parents' wrath and displeasure would be brought down upon my head." And I hurried away toward our home room, leaving Janene to the pursuit of her quarry.

I was on my way to language class -- French, to be specific -- when I came face to face with the new girl.

"Hi," I said. "I'm Rachael Smith. Welcome to Thrush Valley High. I hope you'll like it here."

"Oh, I do!" came the quick and softly-spoken exclamation. "The valley and the mountains remind me of my homeland."

"Homeland?" I questioned cautiously with a smile. She nearly disarmed me with her smile.

"I'm from Germany," she replied in flawless English. "My parents will be moving here sometime in January, the Lord willing. They felt that I should come on ahead and get my final year of schooling here rather than break into the last half of the year."

"But . . . but . . . where . . . ? I mean . . . ."

"Where am I staying? Is this what you're wondering?" she asked with another genuine smile. "Ye . . . yes."

"Most of our close relatives live over here in the United States of America," she exclaimed. "I'm living with my Aunt Katrina and Uncle Jacob. In fact, I was named after Aunt Katrina. I'm Katrina Wolf, and I'm totally harmless; not at all vicious or fierce as per my last name."
She laughed softly at that and I laughed with her. I liked her. Really liked her.

"I'm glad to meet you, Katrina," I told her as she fell in step with me. "Are . . . are you . . . taking . . . French, too?" I finally asked, hoping she knew where she was heading for.

"I am. And if I can sandwich Spanish in somewhere I'd like to take it also. This will be my final year of French. You see, someday, with God's help, I plan to be a missionary. Rather, I should say that God called me to be a missionary."

I gulped. I had never heard anything like this before.

When I didn't reply, Katrina said, "You know what a missionary is, don't you?"

It was uncanny the way this lovely girl could read my thoughts.

"I . . . I . . . well, I've heard something about a missionary, I believe. Would this Mother Teresa whom the papers tell about be a . . . a missionary? I guess I'm just not up with that sort of thing," I added apologetically, hurrying to my seat in class.

Our school buzzed for days with the news of Katrina's sudden, unheralded and unannounced arrival. Janene was humiliated and angry that she was not informed about it. The boys, everyone to the last boy in the senior class, flipped over the modest, totally unimpressed Katrina. The girls were jealous and furious because of the boys' unconcern for them. In general, the senior class was in turmoil for several weeks. Some of the girls hated Katrina with a passion. Me? I stood in awe of her. She was different. I admired and respected her. She had a shining face and seemed constantly to be joyously at peace with everything and everybody. It was Kyle, my twin, who nearly made me flip. "Sis," he said one morning as we waited together for the school bus, "did you know we're sinners?"

"Sinners?" I exclaimed, in a high pitched, squeaky sounding voice not at all like my usual coolly-collected, well-modulated voice. "Forevermore, Kyle, where did you get such a crazy idea?" I asked, wanting to shake him for
daring to say such a thing. "I'm not a sinner! Maybe you are; but I am not. So there! We're good moral people," I defended.

"But you are, Rachael. Here, read this; maybe you'll change your mind after you read it." And Kyle thrust a paper into my hand.

"Where did you get this?" I asked indignantly, wanting to tear the paper to pieces but refraining from doing so out of respect for what was my brother's personal belonging and property.

"I found it on top of my books on the desk yesterday. Don't ask me how it got there for I don't know how. Maybe God had an angel drop it off special delivery for me because He knew I needed it and would believe it."

"Oh, Kyle, what nonsense. Such talk! You've never been religious in your life."

"But I've never been irreligious either, Rachael. I just never heard anything much about God, nor about being a sinner and needing God's forgiveness."

"Forgiveness for what? You're not a thief, nor a murderer. So why do you need forgiven?"

"Because I am a sinner; a dirty, wicked sinner who helped to crucify Jesus and nail Him to the cross."

I could scarcely believe what I was hearing. Was my twin losing his brilliant mind? I wondered, searching his serious looking face and his deep blue-green eyes for any visible and noticeable signs of such. But all that I saw were deep wells of tears in his eyes and a look of such pain on his face as to make me want to weep.

"Please read the little paper," he said, in what was barely more than a hoarse-sounding whisper. "We're twins, Rachael, and I think what we do about this we should do together."

My heart began to hammer. Don't ask me why; I can't explain the why of it. I only knew that something serious and seriously important was about to happen to Kyle. To me. I mean, to both of us. Kyle was the thinker, the
leader; I pretty much followed his no-nonsense, sensible course and way of doing things.

I shifted the books in my arm to a more comfortable position, then began reading the little paper in my free hand.

I became smitten and convicted and condemned as I read. I was a sinner, after all, I discovered. Every scripture on the little paper proved this to be an irrefutable and an undeniable fact. And worse still, I was on my way to a burning, literal place of never-ending fire and torment unless I forsook and repented of my sins and became born again through Christ Jesus and His shed blood.

"Oh, Kyle!" I cried out in anguish of soul and spirit. "What will we do? Why didn't someone tell us this before? Mother and Father are lost too. What will we do? I am a sinner. And I . . . I'm lost. Oh, this is terrible."

"Only if we continue on in our sins, Rachael. But we don't need to go on like this any longer: the little paper tells us that by confessing our sins to Jesus we can be forgiven. Let's try it. I believe it. And I'm sure this is what Katrina has done. She has something that makes her face shine, and keeps her sweet and happy no matter how nasty and hateful the girls are to her. And believe me, Rachael, some of them have really been making it rough for her."

"Let's ask her about it, Kyle. I'm sure she'll be able to help us. Here comes the bus; we can't do too much about it anyhow right now."

"OK, Rachael. How about the cafeteria at noon? I'll try to get the table in the corner. You bring Katrina. . . ."

And bring her I did! I could scarcely wait till the classes were dismissed for lunch.

Kyle and I listened eagerly, openly, and intently as Katrina talked to us about Jesus, His death and resurrection, and why He died. We not only listened, we wept. Neither of us had ever before heard anything so wondrously amazing and wonderful. My heart melted completely. I knew that it was now or never for me.
"Katrina," I said brokenly, "I want to give my heart to Jesus. I want Him to forgive me of all my sins and to live forever in my heart. I . . . I'm sorry I kept Him outside so long. But we . . . we didn't know."

I saw my twin's lips quiver and tremble. Great tears were falling from his eyes. "I'm ready to repent and forsake my sins," he cried quickly. "Why didn't someone tell us this long ago?"

"God sent me here," Katrina said, speaking softly before she began to pray for us.

That was the beginning of a new day for Kyle and me. We were born again; old things passed away and all things became new. We were changed from the inside out. I learned the meaning of what a missionary was" God had sent Katrina to America to evangelize Kyle and me. I was joyously happy in my soul. So was my twin.

The little paper, what about it? Just as I was leaving the cafeteria, I saw Katrina drop one onto Holly Moore's books. God's human "angel" was fulfilling her calling well on foreign (to her) soil. It was time now that Kyle and I assist her.

"Look!" I whispered to my brother as Katrina put another little paper on top of the cash register when no one was there. "Your angel, Kyle."

"Thank God for sending her," he answered hoarsely. "She won't be working single-handedly anymore!"


Kyle looked at me, then squeezed my hand. "You're sounding like Katrina," he declared, and I'm proud of it."