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MAKING TIME
By Mrs. Paul E. King

Starla wiped the last cookie pan dry, then she slid it with the others just dried in its place inside the cupboard. She heaved a sigh of contentment as she sat on one of the stools around the kitchen island and surveyed the fragrant-smelling and perfectly-shaped cookies which she had just baked. And best of all, the kitchen was once again in tip-top shape and was shiny clean, with not so much as a hint of spilled flour or sugar on the

countertop for her mother to see when she got home from the sewing bee, as old Mrs. Spangler had dubbed the new missionary endeavor in which the ladies from the church were making blankets, diapers and warm flannel nightgowns to be shipped to some foreign field whose name Starla had long since forgotten.

She sipped milk from the glass in front of her and munched on one of the still-warm cookies with instant delight. She was overjoyed with the flavor of her newly-concocted cookies. Having been born with a flair for experimentation in trying new mixtures and flavors, Starla, not infrequently, surprised both her parents and herself with some truly tasty and nutritious new dishes and baked goods. Today's combination-surprise was delicious indeed. Unless the Lord had other plans for her life, she wanted to become a Home Ec teacher some day. Cooking and baking were truly times of excitement and enjoyment for her.

She finished drinking the milk and ate the last bite of cookie, then she hopped off the stool like a small child rushing away to play. Today she had something special to do; something which she felt excited over and in which she had sensed God's gentle nudge.

Smiling, and humming softly, Starla went to her room and brought the pale pink basket to the kitchen. She had gathered a lovely pale pink lining to fit the basket, then she had ruffled the material and put it all around the upper edge of the oval shaped basket as well as on top of the handle, adding ribbons and dainty little nosegays of silk flowers in various places. The finished product was beautiful indeed. Better still, she knew it would match a certain very dear girl's room perfectly.

Placing the basket on the countertop, she began filling it with the many small, individually-wrapped gifts which she had prepared earlier. Then, very carefully, she boxed a generous supply of the cookies and left the house with her treasures carried in her arms.

The day was beautiful, like the spirit with which she was taking her gifts and tokens of love. Starla felt a happiness in her being which defied words or any attempt, even, at trying to express just how happy she was. It was like bluebirds were singing in her heart and like fragrant lilies and roses were blooming inside. She could not describe her joy, which seemed boundless

and constant since she was sanctified wholly and was following closely to the Christ of Calvary.

A cardinal whistled and called from a nearby maple tree; she paused to listen and was richly repaid with a glimpse of the handsome bird. Oh, how beautiful everything was since her heart and life had become attuned to the Master's Voice and His will those many years ago, when she was only a small child.

She stood watching and listening until the songster opted for another site and flew away, then she continued on her way, conscious of each lovely thing around her.

She wondered then what the Garden of Eden must have been like and wished that Eve had not been beguiled by the serpent. But she had, and sin had entered into the world and God had found it necessary to provide a Sacrifice, once and for all, for sin, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God! Oh, how she loved Him. And thanked and praised Him for shedding His blood for her sins. It was the precious fountain of Jesus' Blood in which she had plunged and was made clean and pure and holy. What a price for her sins! What a sacrifice!

Tears came to her eyes as she thought about God's sacrificial Lamb and all that He suffered, endured, and went through for her. And she was so unworthy and so undeserving, too!

Starla walked on, so very thankful that she had not rejected or spurned Calvary's Love and waited until she was old to give her heart and life to the blessed Saviour.

She saw the lovely old stone house before she got to it even. Oh, how she did love the Hansons' centuryold house! It had seemed to defy time and change, remaining sturdy and strong in spite of decay all around it.

She hurried now; she was anxious to see her friend's expression when she gave her the gifts. Judeen was a very dear friend. A special friend, really; it was she who had told her and her family about Jesus. Judeen and she -- Starla -- were little girls then; but Judeen's love for Jesus was so genuine and

real until she, Starla went to the altar and got gloriously converted and later she was sanctified wholly.

She walked to the gate and stepped inside of the fenced-in yard, smelling the fragrance of the pink climbing roses that bloomed profusely on their trellised arbors; then, reluctantly, she left their beauty and fragrance and stepped up to the porch. What a thing of beauty and of timeless change was this house, with its enormous porch "marching" around three sides of the sturdily-built and well-kept place!

How many children had played on the porch? she often wondered. And how many couples had courted on the swing? She had been told by her parents that, years ago, a porch or a parlor were the courting places for sweethearts and couples. Generally, a daughter was not allowed the freedoms of her, Starla's, day. The girl's courting was done on the porch in summer; sometimes, even, with the family members themselves enjoying the night breezes and with the father keeping a watchful eye on his daughter, making sure her suitor kept his place and knew his bounds.

Starla smiled, recalling her grandmother telling her about the time when her father thought it was time for her sweetheart to leave. "It's almost nine o'clock, Miriam" he had announced, standing in the doorway and facing his daughter and the young man, Starla's grandfather, who had already asked for her hand in marriage.

"Thank you, Sir," Grandmother Bergen told Starla her sweetheart had replied, as he remained seated beside her on the swing.

Ten minutes later, Grandmother had told her, her father stepped outside and addressed Starla's grandfather, stating, "Our daughter's curfew is nine o'clock, Isaac. It's time you were leaving. Miriam" he added, "you will tell Isaac goodnight then come inside."

"Did you do it, Grandma?" Starla had asked, all starry-eyed at the thought of Grandma ever having courted.

"Yes, indeed, child. Isaac and I were obedient children."

"But, Grandma you weren't little anymore; you said you were engaged!" Starla was incredulous, she remembered now.

"That's right, honey. But so long as we were living at home, in those days we were all expected to obey the rules of the parents. And we did. Willingly, too. We knew our father and mother wanted only what was good and best for us."

Starla knocked lightly now with the old door knocker, a thing that always fascinated her. But there were ever so many things about this house that fascinated her. The solid oak beams throughout the house were every one of them hand hewn, Mr. Hanson had told her father! And he should know; the house had remained in the Hanson family from one generation to the next. It had been remodeled beautifully inside in tasteful and careful keeping with the high ceilings, the beams, and the open, banistered, curving staircase.

"Why, Starla Jean!" Mrs. Hanson remarked pleasantly as she threw the door open wide. "Do come inside. God sent you today: Judeen's in quite a bit of pain. And then, of course, the enemy of her soul tries to take advantage of her 'not so on top' feeling, and get her to thinking she's forgotten by her friends, which we know isn't so. My, I'm glad you've come, dear. And what a lovely basket that is!"

"I spray-painted it and made the liner myself, Mrs. Hanson. I wanted it to match Judeen's room. I thought her leg was healing" Starla added, changing the subject so she could learn more about her friend.

"Oh, it is, honey. It's just that some days she has quite a bit more pain than others. And I think that heavy cast is bothering her, too. She says her foot is so itchy, and of course there's no way she can scratch it." Mrs. Hanson laughed lightly and softly, adding, "I'll be happy for her when the cast can be removed."

"I guess we could say it's a necessary nuisance" Starla added, laughing, as she followed Mrs. Hanson up the carpeted stairway to Judeen's room.

Mrs. Hanson laughed, then gave Starla a gentle hug and hurried downstairs.

"Oh, what a beautiful morning!" Starla sang as she entered Judeen's room and rushed over to where her friend sat with her leg propped up on pillows and hugged her soundly.

"I brought you something" she said, laughing and putting the basket and the box of cookies in Judeen's lap. "You may share what's in the box" she added. "Sharing always makes one feel happy and good and wonderful."

"And you are God's gift of happiness to me today, Starla," Judeen stated firmly. "Can you believe it if I tell you that I was beginning to listen to the voice of Satan, and was almost feeling sorry for myself and even beginning to wonder if my friends had forgotten me? Isn't this simply awful! I know we shouldn't say "awful" and maybe 'dreadful' would have been the more proper word, but in my case I do believe that I can say I think it's simply awful. Why, Starla, I've never been tempted or tested in this way before."

"I suppose that as we grow up we'll be faced with many more of these 'strange' and fiercely-strong trials and testings and temptations, Judeen honey. But remember what Paul wrote in I Corinthians 10:13 -- There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.' Oh, Judeen, God will make a way of escape for you, so you may be able to bear up under this new and strange testing-trial-temptation time. He has promised to do it. I believe it with all of my heart!"

Judeen wiped bright tears from her eyes. "Like I just said awhile ago, you are God's gift of happiness to me, Starla. And also, His gift of comfort and consolation. By this I mean that God used you just now to refresh my memory regarding that wonderful, never-fail, always-true promise. I feel so much better already. Just knowing that I have an earthly friend who cared enough to come and see me has helped to drive the gloom of my temporary predicament away."

"And isn't it wonderful that your condition and problem is only a temporary one, Judeen? The Lord is so good to us."

"Indeed He is. And now I want you to tell me how you managed to bake these beautiful, deliciouslytempting cookies and came to see me when I know that today is the day when the young people from the church were

going to that farm where they show you how wool is spun into yarn, and all those other old timey things are being done, and demonstrated, by women and men who wear old time dresses, bonnets, aprons, bib overalls, et cetera, et cetera?"

Starla smiled. "Who told you about that?" she asked sweetly.

"I heard it from at least half-a-dozen or more of the young people, Starla. They were all so excited, and said they wished I could be going with the group too. Now, why didn't you go? You should have. You're always making time for others."

Judeen wiped tears away again. "You'll just never know, though, this side of heaven, what your coming has meant to me today, Starla. You should have gone on with the others; but I'm thankful you're here! I needed the encouragement you just gave me. I know the Lord will bless you greatly for what you have done."

"We are told to bear one another's burdens, Judeen; I'm only doing what God's Word says to do. While praying this morning I felt impressed of the Lord not to go to that farm but to visit you instead. And I'm truly happy that I've come."

"You're a true friend, Starla Jean. I love you and I thank God for you and your friendship. You're never too busy, no matter what you're doing, to make time for those who need you."

"Hush. Hush." Starla teased. "The Bible says to beware when all men speak well of you. Now I want you to begin 'poking' around in that basket and then to open a gift. Or two. Or three. It's a basket filled with little 'cheer-me-uppers' and every single one is for my special friend -- you."

"I believe I'm going to cry again." Judeen said, reaching for another tissue as she fingered the beautiful basket with her other hand. "It's so beautiful!" she exclaimed softly. "And it matches this room perfectly! Oh, thank you, Starla. Thank you for everything. I will cherish forever the memory of this day and how, again, you have made time to fulfill God's command to 'visit the sick: totally disregarding your opportunity of going to that wonderful farm and. . . ."

"Sh-h-h! No more about me." Starla said, laying a finger across Judeen's lips. "God wanted me here with you and I'm enjoying every minute of it. I'll enjoy it even more when you stop talking about me and begin opening a gift or two. There are enough things in there to keep you busy and occupied for a long time."

"How very thoughtful and kind of you!" Judeen exclaimed as she began untying a gift. In an instant, she had the wrapping off. With a squeal of surprise and delight, she hugged Starla's neck. "Oh, this is the very book I've been wanting to read!" she cried happily as she thanked Starla.

"Wherever did you locate it?" Judeen asked with shining eyes.

"I had a friend order it from a Christian book store where she lives." Starla replied.

"Oh, thank you. Thank you, my dear, kind, makingtime Starla!" Judeen cried happily.