THE DIVISION

by Mrs. Paul E. King

Jerica Runyan felt numb and dazed as she read the note over for the third time. Without any doubt whatever, the handwriting was Derica's: she'd recognize that handwriting anywhere. Always, Derica wrote with a flair and with flourish. Heretofore, Derica's writing gave her the feeling of freedom, like a butterfly breaking out of its cocoon and flying away on a warm summer breeze and landing on a lovely flower. Today, however, the brief note with its
neat handwriting, gave her chills and a feeling of deep sadness and grief -- Derica and Erica despised her. It seemed unreal, that they could dislike her so greatly and despise her so deeply.

She read the note through a fourth time, then she tore it into tiny pieces and dropped the pieces into a nearby waste basket. The best way to deal with a hurt was to pray over it and turn it over to the Lord then forget about it, she realized. Especially so when and if one meant to remain spiritual and to grow in the things of the Lord, which she did.

She turned her attention to the math assignment for the following day's class and was soon absorbed in the work of the problems, forgetting completely about the note and its contents and forgetting, too, about her two roommates.

Derica's voice sliced into her nearly-completed assignment then with something akin to acid and hatred. "Don't you realize it's your night for providing the meal?" she snapped, poking her head around the doorway. "Erica and I are starved; we're tired of waiting."

Jerica got to her feet. "I'm sorry, Derica. I really am. I hadn't realized it was suppertime just yet: we never eat before six o'clock."

Derica gave her a look of such scorn and profound hatred that it cut Jerica like a knife

"Enjoy your own ridiculous company, Jerica; Erica and I are going out for our dinner tonight; over to the Starlight Inn." And Derica was gone as quickly as she had come.

Jerica stood like a petrified mummy for a while The Starlight Inn! That was where she and her two roommates had had many an evening engagement together, singing, mimeing and just doing their much-sought after zany acts. It had brought good money in for them, to be sure, and for miles around they were known as the best and the greatest in their singing and performing repertoire.

Like one in a daze, Jerica walked into the kitchen of the small apartment which she shared with Derica and Erica and checked the clock on
the wall, comparing its hands to the one in her bedroom. It was identical to her own timepiece -- a whole hour and fifteen minutes before six o'clock.

With a heavy sigh she sank into a chair near the table, realizing again that those who would follow Jesus Christ and make Him King and Lord of their life would, indeed, suffer persecution and have a cross to bear and to carry. But it was worth whatever the cost may be, she knew, as a wave of inner joy and deep soul-rest and peace surged through her soul.

She sat near the table and reminisced the past and its course of events that brought about the change in her life and, with it, the derision and scorn of her two college roommates. Derica and she had been close friends all through their school years together back home. They had sung together at various school functions and in special musicals. They were in demand for special occasions outside of the school, as well.

They had had lots of fun together; hilarious fun; worldly fun. They were known and billed as "The Zany Harmonizers." Their popularity and fame followed them into college where, in a very short period of time, they were earning excellent wages for their worldly talent and their original productions and hilarious presentations.

Jerica recalled now how her mother often told her as a child that Derica's mother, giving birth to her own daughter a week after Jerica was born, decided upon the name Derica for her tiny little infant since the two mothers had been friends for years and she thought it would be nice to have her little Derica play with and become a bosom friend to her own friend's Jerica. And they had been, down across the years.

In college, at the end of the first semester of Derica's and her first year, a vivacious, petite and extremely attractive young woman approached them as they were walking across the campus.

"Hi," she called, falling in step with them. "Believe it or not, but I'm Erica Nisely -- Jerica, Derica and Erica. You're a sensation, I must admit: I heard you and saw you at the party the other night. You're terrific But I believe with three of us collaborating our expertise and talents we can be an even greater sensation. The gods have designed it that we should get together, even having our parents name us as they did -- Jerica, Derica, and Erica." Again she repeated the names.
Jerica remembered how Derica and she had just looked at each other. Neither of their families were in any way religious; she guessed they could well have been classed as heathens, only they never thought of themselves as such. While they were looking at each other, Erica bubbled on profusely:

"My 'credentials'?" she bubbled on with a question mark in her voice as she smilingly stepped in front of the pair and pirouetted 'round and 'round like a dainty butterfly and sang a touching aria in a clear-as-a-bell voice.

"An original," she announced with a flourish of her slender arm, adding, "I composed it. What do you think of it?"

"But that's opera," Derica and Jerica had remarked simultaneously, hoping Erica would capture the significance of the statement. She did. Immediately.

"I didn't say I'd project opera into your repertoire," she answered, still smiling and flitting around like a graceful butterfly in front of them. "I was merely giving you a mini audition." Then stopping her pirouetting as abruptly as she had begun, she said, "I still think we could make money -- big money - - if you'd take me into your act."

"We'll think about it," Derica replied.

"When will I have your decision?" Erica persisted. "I'm willing to meet with you anytime. . . ."

Three weeks later, the three had performed at a college function. It was an instant hit. Erica moved in with Derica and Jerica and for two and a half years they lived together in perfect harmony, making good money with the use of their talents and getting a college education at the same time. Then Jerica went home for spring break. Derica and Erica decided to go on a short cruise. The big division came -- rather, was revealed -- when Jerica returned to college and was once more settled in the apartment with her two roommates.

"Hey, you're different!" Derica exclaimed as soon as she saw her old friend. "What's with you? You look serenely peaceful and . . . and . . . well . . . different."
"If you ask me, she looks more like a corpse than a living, mortal, human being." Erica said, studying Jerica critically and intensely. "Don't tell me you've gone and gotten religious while you were home on spring break! Oh, my, a Bible! Of all things!" Erica cried, seeing the Bible lying on Jerica's bed.

"Girls," Jerica began in a softly-gentle tone of voice, "I'm a child of God now. I got converted while I was home. And then I was sanctified wholly too. Oh, I wonder why no one ever told me before now that I could have all my sins forgiven and that I could know I'll go to Heaven when I die. I never knew," she said sadly. "Not until Aunt Carrie came to visit Mother and Father and she told us all how a neighbor lady had invited her to go to church with her and while at church, the Lord had spoken to her heart and she went down to the altar and was saved; forgiven of all her sins. Isn't it wonderful?"

"And you mean you swallowed that ridiculous line!" Derica exploded, with her hands on her hips in a gesture of total disgust and utter belief.

"I found the Lord, Derica. He came into my heart. At last -- at long last -- I'm completely satisfied. All these years I've been searching and seeking for something that would satisfy the deep inner longing and craving of my soul, and today I can tell you both that I found true and lasting satisfaction: I found the Savior. I want each of you to know Him like I do. You'll be so happy; so full of joy. It's wonderful."

"Stop it, Jerica! Stop it!" Derica cried. "It's bad enough that you have gone off the deep end; we don't need two more." Turning, she almost hissed the words at Jerica. "I suppose this means that little Miss Religious won't be going to the Starlight Inn anymore to perform."

"You're right, Derica, I won't. I wouldn't be able to take Jesus in there with me. And I won't be singing the songs we used to sing, nor do anymore of the zany acts I used to do. I have new desires; old things are passed away and everything has become new."

"Are you saying that you won't be helping us anymore at all?" Erica asked, incredulous. "Did I hear you rightly?"
"Only if we'll sing for Jesus and for His honor and glory, Erica. I'm ashamed when I think of all the silly and crazy things I did before Jesus saved me and gave me a new heart."

"You're crazy, Jerica!" Erica exclaimed. "You need to see a psychiatrist. You . . . you're. . . ."

"Erica's right," Derica interrupted. "Come, we'll take you to Doctor Whithers. He's excellent, they say. I know he helped Jenny Morgley. She was about to have a nervous breakdown and he. . . ."

Jerica raised her hand in a gesture for silence. "I'm not crazy, as you think I am," she remarked. "And I don't need a psychiatrist: I've never been more whole than I am since Jesus came into my heart and made me a new creature. For the first time ever in my life, I am whole -- body, soul, mind, heart and spirit. Christ sits enthroned within me. I am not my own; I've been bought with a price -- the precious shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Please, won't you turn from your sinful ways and give Jesus a place in your heart? I can guarantee you joy and peace and perfect soul rest, the likes of which you've never experienced or known before."

Derica flew into a rage and Erica turned and fled from the room, exclaiming, "You're crazy! Crazy!"

From that time on, there was a division. The girls rarely spoke to Jerica and when they did it was to make a cutting remark or a snide comment laced with acid and hatred.

She felt sure the only reason they hadn't moved out of the apartment was because of the rent; with three of them sharing the expense, it was not a hardship for anyone. The same thing applied with the food bills, only, since her change of heart, Jerica ate alone more often than not. Her roommates seemed to choose eating late or early -- she rarely ever knew when they'd be there -- or to eat out at a restaurant.

Erica and Derica became a two-some in the field of entertainment and, Jerica guessed, from comments she heard by way of fellow students and classmates, that they were doing well. Her heart ached for them. She longed to have them change; to experience the blessed peace and joy of the born again. But they remained adamant, hard, and unmoved.
She thought of the note then and tears ran from her eyes. "You're crazy," the note read. "Crazy! You used to be loads of fun: not anymore. Your head needs examined. Get with it; see a psychiatrist. I hate you. Hate you."

"Derica, my dear friend!" she cried aloud, as the contents of the note came back to haunt her. "Oh, Derica, how utterly deceived and lost you are!"

She stood in the doorway and looked toward the street that ran by their apartment and how suddenly she knew the true meaning of Jesus' words, "If any man will be my disciple, let him take up his cross daily and follow me. Also, "... but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

Yes, she was hated by her former friends but loved greatly by her newfound Friend, Jesus. With renewed faith in Christ and a greater than ever determination to win her two friends to Christ, Jerica purposed in her heart that she would devote even more of her time to praying and fasting and waiting on God for their salvation. God knew how to bring down the walls and barriers of division. Indeed He did! She must wait and trust, and that, patiently.