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THE BIG NIGHT
By Mrs. Paul E. King

I should have known better when I accepted Bitsy's invitation to the party that night. But I didn't stop to think of anything other than a party with a lot of fun games to play and a mess of super-moist chocolate chip cookies and cheese loaded pizzas, fresh and piping-hot from the oven. Bitsy was known for her expertise in the kitchen.

Brad and I got there a bit later than the others since we worked after school at the Fairway Market. Brad parked his car in the alley at the back of Bitsy's house; everything out front was full.

"Smells good in here," I said, pushing the door open and going in after knocking.

"Oh, Hi Cory and Brad," Bitsy chortled merrily and gleefully as she met us inside the door, waving a pizza cutter above her head. "How about helping?" she asked, grabbing an apron from the chair and tossing it our way.

"Sure," Brad and I answered simultaneously, jumping for the apron.

Brad caught the apron and donned it immediately, asking, "When do we eat, Bitsy? I'm hungry. After all, Cory and I work hard for our after-work snack, wherever we eat it."

"The first batch of pizza's ready now for cutting," Bitsy informed us. "Here's the cutter, Brad. Don't make the pieces too small, OK?"

"What like, Bits; halves or quarters?"

"Hey, I don't want to slave in here all night," she teased. "Cut each in six generous slices; no more, no less." She made a face at Brad then turned away and began readying more pizzas for the oven.

I got in on the act by scooping grated cheese over the sauce laden rounds of dough and dressing them up with chopped onion, olives, sliced mushrooms and peppers and cutup sausages and pepperoni. My mouth watered as I worked, and the fragrance of Brad's freshly-cut slices was almost more than I could take.

"Hey, Bitsy, how about if I eat a piece now, while it's still piping hot and while the cheese strings en route from the pizza server to my mouth?" I asked. "I'm afraid I can't wait another minute. Especially since what Brad's cutting is my favorite -- plain old cheese with lots of tomato sauce. Um! Um!"

"Bits, you sure know how to make pizza," I said, taking a generous bite. "Fabulous pizza, I mean. I can't stand the skimpy kind. You know what I mean; the kind where you can scarcely see the sauce or taste the cheese.

You must have spent a week's baby sitting money for every -- thing you've got on these pizzas. Um! They're loaded. Delicious! Delicious!"

"I'd say she spent a lot more than one week's earnings," Brad declared. "How many pounds of cheese did you buy, Bits?"

Taking more pizzas from the oven and sliding more in, she laughed merrily again. "That's my little secret," she answered, as she hurried from the kitchen into the dining room with Brad's sliced pizzas.

Both Brad and I ate our fill as we worked. And, I may add, while it was hot-hot from the oven. I never tasted better pizza. Nor, even, any as good as Bitsy's. She didn't spare on anything; not a thing.

"Well, let's go in and join the gang," she said, when the last hot pizza was taken from the oven and sliced. "There's more than pizza to eat, and plenty to drink,"

Like lambs going to the slaughter, Brad and I followed Bitsy into the dining room, expecting to have all the pop we wanted, to drink, and perhaps even finding a chocolate cake on the table.

Imagine our surprise our shock -- when we found no Pepsi or Sprite or Dr. Pepper but all kinds of alcoholic beverages instead. The mere smell of the stuff, coming from all who were drinking, which was everybody but Brad and me, for by now Bitsy was drinking like she was thirsting, well, it made me sick.

I couldn't believe my eyes. Some of the fellows -and the girls, too -- were already so drunk that they were staggering. Off to one side, others were doing drugs. Grabbing Brad by the arm, I said, "Hey, we don't belong in here. Let's get out of here as fast as we can."

I walked over to Bitsy, thanked her for the pizza, then told her we were leaving, that neither Brad nor I believed in or partook of what was going on. It was much like a nightmare. I finished with tears in my eyes, telling Bitsy we would be praying for her and saying, "You're too nice to mess your life up with drugs and alcohol. Give your heart to Jesus, Bitsy: Only He can satisfy and fill the longing in your heart." She laughed in my face and turned away.

Brad and I were at the back door, ready to leave, when we heard a booming voice bellow from the front of the house -- the living room, we figured -- "What's going on in here, Bitsy? And what are you fellows and girls doing in my house? Sit: Every one of you, sit! I've called the police. . . ."

"Daddy! Mother!" It was Bitsy. "You said you wouldn't be home till tomorrow!"

"Just what do you think you're doing?" Bitsy's father bellowed the question out like a fog horn.

Brad and I slipped silently out the door and raced away in the car; sweat was running down my face. The seriousness of what was about to happen and take place filled me with fear. A drug bust was not a laughing matter! And if Bitsy told the police that we were there we could be in for serious trouble. Even now, I thought, they could be looking for us.

"I'm scared," I admitted to Brad. "I had no idea Bitsy was into anything like that. Worse still, I went without my parents' knowledge or permission. They went to that missionary service in Middlesport tonight so I couldn't call them to find out if I could go or couldn't go after work. I just figured they wouldn't mind."

"I'm in the same 'boat,' Cory. I never go like this without first asking my father or mother. Or both, sometimes."

"I know what I'm going to do tonight," I said. "What?" Brad asked quickly.

"I'm going to stay up until my folks get home and then I'm going to tell them everything. And you know, I think I'll go to Mr. Halters, our school principal, and also tell him what happened."

"I'll go with you, Cory. I want Mr. Halters to know that I'm not guilty of doing drugs nor of drinking alcoholic beverages either. And since my folks will be home when I get there, I'm going to tell them what happened. We've always had open lines of communication and I mean to keep it this way, with God's help."

"Same here, Brad. And it makes for a wonderful relationship in the home. A trusting relationship, really. Well, thanks for the ride; or hadn't you noticed that this is my house?" I asked as Brad drove on by the house.

"Sorry, Cory. I forgot that I had you as a passenger. I really did. But you know why I forgot," he said seriously. "Thanks for reminding me. I'm in a state of shock over the events that so recently transpired. Well, goodnight, my friend. Let's not forget to pray for each other."

"Count on me; I won't. By God's help, I won't. Goodnight, Brad."

It was late when my parents returned home from the meeting and they were truly surprised to find me waiting up for them.

"What's wrong?" Mom asked. "Did something happen that you're still up?"

"You ill, son?" Dad queried, looking at me with that serious look of his.

"Sit down, please," I said. "First, I want to ask you to forgive me for going away after work tonight without first asking you or getting your permission. I'm sorry. It's the first and only time I've ever done this. Bitsy asked both Brad and me, at school, to come to a party at her house tonight. I knew I couldn't ask your permission since you were already gone. I took it for granted that you wouldn't mind; so I went."

"Why of course you're forgiven, Cory," both my parents remarked.

"Thanks, much," I replied. "But Dad and Mom, Brad and I just may be in for some serious trouble: Bitsy's party turned out to be a booze and drug party! Neither Brad nor I had the slightest idea even that she was into this sort of thing. We were stunned. Shocked."

"What did you do?" Dad asked quickly, sitting now on the very edge of his seat.

"As soon as we saw what was going on, we left. It seems Bitsy must have thought her folks would be gone all night. Instead, they got home just as Brad and I were exiting, at the back kitchen door. Brad's car was parked out back; everything was parked full in the front. We heard Bitsy's dad bellow that

he had called the police; and we wasted no time getting out of there. So that's where we are. But neither Brad nor I had anything to do with what was going on. Except with the pizzas. Since we came in through the kitchen door, Bitsy put us to work immediately, helping her with the pizzas."

Dad was thoughtfully silent for a long while, adding only an occasional, "Hm! Hm-m!" to the stillness.

"Do you think I should talk to the police and tell them we were there, Dad, but that we had no idea it was a drug and booze party?"

Dad's face brightened. "That might not be a bad idea, Son," he said, as he got to his feet. "Come on, I'll take you to the police station myself. Let's get Brad and take him along."

"I'm sure his dad will want to go, too. And Dad, both Brad and I plan to talk to our school principal tomorrow morning, God willing, and tell him exactly what happened and how we happened to be there."

"I'm proud of you, Cory. Come, let's go."

We entered the police station feeling rather weak and hot, and when the Chief of Police greeted us with, "What may I do for you?" my legs felt almost like a piece of rubber. But once Brad and I started talking some of the rubbery feeling left.

"Some of our men are over there right now," Officer Perkins told us. "But why did you go there in the first place if you haven't done drugs nor been on booze?" he questioned us, never once taking his steelgray-eyes off us.

"Because, Sir, neither of us knew Bitsy was into this sort of thing," I answered. "As soon as Brad and I entered the dining room and saw what was going on, we told Bitsy we were leaving; that we didn't believe in doing drugs and drinking booze, and that we didn't partake of this sort of thing. We left then."

"How long were you there?"

I looked at Brad; Brad looked at me. Neither of us knew just how long.

"We work after school at Fairway Market," I answered suddenly. 'Wee came from Fairway, after it closed for the night, to Bitsy's house. We had to park out back since everything was full in the front of the house. So Brad and I came in through the kitchen door and, immediately, Bitsy involved us with getting the pizzas ready for serving. So if we can find out how long it takes to make twelve big pizzas -- dress them up, bake them and cut them for serving -- we'll have how long we were there," I stated truthfully.

"Then you were not in the front of the house with the others at all?" Again the piercing eyes searched our faces and watched our reaction to his pointed question. "No, Sir. That is correct," we stated in unison. "Not until Bitsy said, 'Let's go in and join the gang,' did we know who was there nor what was going on. And that's when we left."

"Thank you; I believe your story, fellows," the big Chief said with a smile. "You will not be involved in any way neither will your names come out in the paper. I appreciate your honesty and your courage. It's men like you two fellows that we need on our force. Think about this when you graduate. . . ."

If ever I felt free and good and tall, it was after that incident of "facing the music," so speaking. And I knew that God was going to help Brad and me as we faced Mr. Halters, the school principal, too.

I learned a big lesson that night: A really big lesson. First, never -- but never! -- go anywhere without first asking yourself, Will I be able to take Jesus with me where I am going? If you aren't sure, or don't know -- like we had no inkling whatever of Bitsy's involvement -- say no! Don't go! You'll be the gainer in the end. Too, ask yourself, Will everything I do glorify Christ? If, again, you don't know or can't say a positive yes to this, Don't do it!

Second, stick by your God-given convictions! No matter how many friends it may cost you, stick by those God-given convictions, and God will both bless and honor you for doing so. The holy, Spirit-filled and spiritual friends God will give you will far outweigh those that have left you.

I learned, too, that, like Joshua, my convictions had held me steady as Brad and I were confronted with the un verbal but very-real visible setting of choice. "Choose ye this day, whom ye will serve," he had cried out and, in almost the same breath, he had declared his stand and standard for truth and

right and righteousness -- "As for me, and for my house," he seems to shout joyously and victoriously, "we will serve the Lord."

I felt gloriously happy as I finally crawled between the sheets on my bed and fell asleep, knowing that I was the Lord's and He was mine and that I hadn't even the slightest desire for any of the devil's offers.