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THE DEAL
(Part 1)
By Mrs. Paul E. King

Ted Seals scanned the ads in the paper with a practiced eye and, always, he came back to the same For Sale ad that he'd noticed when he first began looking for a used car. He'd have to go and see the car for himself, he decided, as he folded the paper neatly and put it on the end table for his dad to read when he came home from work.

That one car sounded like what he was looking for. He couldn't buy anything with a too-high price tag, that was certain and sure, and he didn't need a car that was "loaded" with all the extras, either, he admitted silently. To be sure, some of the extras were nice; really nice. But when a fellow was in college and working on the side, well, he could "afford" to forego those nice extras in order to meet all his college expenses. And really, all he needed right now was a car that was in good condition and good running order with not too many miles on it.

He left a note on the kitchen table for his mother, stating that he'd gone to the used car lot in the next town and that he may be a bit late for supper, then he slid behind the wheel of his dad's pick-up truck and drove away, thinking how much he had to be thankful for.

His father and mother were devout Christians. And though it had taken them many years of struggling and hard work, they had finally managed to buy the hardware store in which his dad had worked for so long as Ted could remember. He hadn't earned big wages when he worked for Mr. Austin, the owner, Ted knew, but it was always steady and dependable work. And his dad was just as steady and dependable as was the work. Mr. Austin knew this. He loved Titus Seals. Loved him so much, in fact, that when it came time for him to retire he insisted that Mr. Seals buy the business.

Ted recalled the hours of praying and waiting upon God for Divine direction by his parents. The weeks passed into months and Mr. Austin waited patiently, not taking retirement until Ted's father got the all-clear signal from Heaven to go ahead. And then, out of loving kindness, Mr. Austin brought the price down to an unbelievably low figure as a surprise to the man who had stood by him during the years when the going was rough and hard, and who had sacrificed time and effort and better paying jobs to see the business get on its feet and become a hustling, bustling, thriving business and a much-enlarged modern building with a spacious and adequate parking lot.

Ted smiled. He remembered how faithfully and cheerfully his parents had tithed their income during those "lean" years. And not merely tithed but given offerings, too. He had so many things to thank God for! The lessons in tithing and giving offerings would be forever fresh and alive in his memory.

Always, in spite of his father's small earnings during those hard years, the Lord had met and supplied their every need. They had proven, again and again, the validity and the steadfastness of the infallible, never-changing Word, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (St. Luke 6:38).

Ted prayed as he drove; prayed for God's help in the selection and the buying of the right car. It would be so easy for him, in himself, to buy the wrong vehicle: appearance could be so deceptive, he realized. Not all that looked beautiful and good externally performed beautiful and good and properly. He knew this, knew too that the car dealers, in order to make their used cars appealing and attractive, cleaned, washed, polished, shined and touched-up their for sale vehicles until an unsuspecting buyer could easily be tempted to buy for beauty and appearance instead of performance and good running condition.

How like man, he mused as he drove down the highway. All too frequently one was swayed and influenced by what he saw on the outside of man. But God, who knew what was within, would someday judge, not by the seeing of the eye nor the hearing of the ear, but by "righteous judgment," as Isaiah declared. This was wonderful, he soliloquized with a pleased smile.

After more than an hour's driving, Ted topped the last hill and saw the town's new courthouse and new municipal building nestled neatly and attractively in the center of the town's newly revamped and modernized downtown section. The American flag, hoisted to the tip of the courthouse pole, fluttered and waved proudly and majestically in the breeze. Ted felt tears sting his eyes and a lump form in his throat while his heart throbbed with pride over the beauty of the waving flag. Reverently, he raised his right hand to his forehead in a salute to Old Glory.

"Thank You for America," he said, lifting his eyes heavenward, "and thank You, kind Father, for what the flag stands for." Then he placed his right hand over his heart and pledged allegiance to the flag. It was good to be an American and to live in a country where he could worship God freely and openly. He praised the Lord for this great freedom and liberty.

He drove down the hill into the picturesque town, not sure where the used car lot was located. So he pulled off the road and consulted the address which he had written down on a piece of paper before leaving home and in a little while he was on his way again.

Ted drove around until he located the street he was looking for, which was on the far east side across town. He found the lot and pulled off the road, Parking where he could find a decent place in which to pull, away from the junk and debris that littered the place. His heart sank when he saw how utterly untidy and junky the place looked and was. Still, he just may find what he needed, he mused, as he walked around junk and litter and clutter in search of a salesman. Hearing a voice, he paused.

"You obeyed my orders?" the voice asked.

"I'm doing it now," came the immediate reply. "In fact, I'm almost finished. And man, what a thing of beauty this old junker turned out to be with all the touching up and cleaning. And now when I'm finished with changing the mileage I'll drive it out to the front of the lot, all shiny-bright and ready to sell."

"You're sure you welded that piece together good on the engine?"

"Come, see for yourself. It's ready for selling, I tell you. I've worked for you long enough to know how you operate, Red, and where to cut corners, as you say."

Ted stood like a statue, listening to the dialogue between the two men. Then he turned and started to leave, inadvertently kicking a piece of tin which rattled against a bit of the metal and brought the man, Red, out into the open.

"Hello-o! What can I do for you?" Red called cheerily, striding over to Ted and smiling broadly as he extended his hand in greeting.

"Nothing, thank you," Ted replied, adding, "I came here to check on a car you have advertised in the Evening News. But I'm not interested since overhearing a bit of conversation not intended for my ears, but which I couldn't help but hear. I want a car that will be what it's advertised to be; not one that's been tampered with and has had the mileage changed and. . . ."

"I've got just the car for you," Red said, blushing a scarlet red and looking embarrassed and shaken. "Look, my friend, if you'll forget you ever heard our conversation I'll make you a super deal," he offered, coming closer to Ted. "You're interested in the '84 Impala, aren't you? We advertised that in the Evening News in a separate section of the paper, I remember. It's a real beauty. Come, let me show it to you. It's standing out on the front lot."

"Thanks, Sir, I'm not interested. I was, when I saw that eye-catching ad. But I've changed my mind."

"Let me show you the car," Red said again. "It's a real beauty. And if you'll not say anything about what you heard, I'll knock three hundred dollars off the selling price."

"Thanks," Ted answered. "I'm not interested anymore. If a man's dishonest in one thing, he'll be dishonest in many things. Sir, what will your answer be to God, when you stand before Him and you must give an account to Him for all the dishonesty you've committed? Each one of us is going to someday stand before Him, you know."

"I figure what I do is my business. So, are you interested in the deal I proposed?"

"Thanks, no," Ted answered as he walked toward his car.

He prayed for Red and his helper all the way home; prayed for their salvation. Somewhere, God had just the right car for him, he knew, and it would not be one where he would be asked to be part and party of a cover up deal either. His highest and greatest desire was to please God and to "walk honestly toward them that are without."

He drove into his driveway, parked the pickup truck and went into the house, whistling one of the old hymns of the church.

(Part 2)

Caitlin drove her dad's old car through the tree-lined, tree-shaded entranceway to the college and followed the paved road to the girls' dorm on the east side of the administration building. She unloaded the few things she had taken home with her for the long weekend and carried them into the

room she shared with KariAn, then she parked the car and started back to the dorm just as Kari's voice called to her.

"Well, it's about time you got back here!" Kari declared as she hurried across campus to Caitlin.

"Really. How's that? Something new happen?" Caitlin asked with a smile.

"Did it ever!" Kari exclaimed, looking like she was in another world. "I'm glad now that I couldn't go home with you," she said quickly. "I fretted about it at first, as you well remember. But, guess what?"

"Oh, KariAn, I wouldn't be able to guess what you're wanting me to guess if I'd guess a hundred times, I'm sure. You have the gift of concealment, if I ever met anyone with such a gift."

"Is that a compliment, or what?"

"It can be a real compliment, providing you're concealing the right thing."

"Such as?"

"Well, gossip, for instance; and not repeating it. But what's happened that's making you so excited?"

"Not what, Caitlin, but whom?"

"Oh, Kari, not again," Caitlin lamented. "Who is it this time? When did Darrell drop out of the picture? I've been gone only four days. . . ."

"I know. I know. And Darrell's been out of the picture for more than three weeks already. If you'd keep your eyes and ears open, my dear, you'd have known this. But you're always so serious minded and so busy studying that you don't notice. I wish you'd have more fun, Catie. Sometimes you worry me."

"Oh, KariAn, I'm enjoying life. Really enjoying it. Only my enjoyment is found completely and entirely in Christ. There are things of greater

importance than boys to me. I came here to study and to further my education not to waste my time on other things. Nor to squander my folks' and my own hard-earned money on things other than education."

"But you're missing out on all the fun, Catie. I don't believe the Lord intended for us to study ourselves to death."

Caitlin laughed. "Now where will we find an individual who is actually guilty of that?" she asked teasingly.

"You come pretty near to fitting that part," KariAn stated candidly. "You turn all the boys down when they want to date you, and you have very little social life. All study and no dates is just a bit too boring for me."

Caitlin smiled. "I don't mind it at all. I came here to get an education, Kari. If I'd have wanted dates I'd have remained at home. In fact, the most noble and finest young man I know is back in my home church. He's Spirit-filled and spiritual and he's totally and completely given over to the Lord. He's unpretentious; without hypocrisy, and not one bit of fickleness or shallowness about him. In plain English, he's genuine."

"Sounds like he's special to you," KariAn added, smiling. "Are you dating him?"

"Not really. I told him I'd rather wait until I was finished with my years here. We correspond though."

KariAn gasped. "And you mean he . . . he said he would? Wait, I mean? Are you crazy, Caitlin? A guy that wonderful has all kinds of females after him." She paused, then added, "Unless he's not good looking and . . . and is a bore to be around."

Smiling broadly, Caitlin opened her purse and pulled out a picture. "I'll let you decide on these things for yourself," she said, handing the picture to KariAn.

"Wow!" KariAn exclaimed, as she saw the tall, auburn-haired young man in the picture. "He's handsome!" she added. "Downright handsome. And he looks like the word bore has never even come within a hundred miles of

him. You make a strikingly-handsome couple, Caitlin. Who took the picture of you two?"

"His brother."

"How old is he? The brother, I mean?" Kari's face wore a mischievous grin.

"Oh, he's married, KariAn."

"Poor me," Kari lamented with a mock sigh. Then, handing the picture back to Caitlin, she said lightly, "Oh well, there are scads of good looking fellows right here on campus. I'll settle for one of them. In fact, I have settled on one, and honestly Catie, he's Mr. Everything, if ever I've seen a Mr. Everything. He's a dream. Did you hear me? A dream! I see flowers and rainbows and butterflies and . . . and everything beautiful whenever I think of him, which is all the time. Honestly Catie, I dream of him in the night and I awaken to bird songs in my heart. Oh, I'm sure this is the real thing this time. Tyler's wonderful."

Going to the dresser, Caitlin began unpacking and putting things neatly into the drawers, saying simply, "No comment at this point and time."

In frustration, KariAn rushed over to her roommate. Placing her hands upon Caitlin's slender shoulders, she said, "You don't believe me, do you? Well, you'll see. I'm in love with Tyler and he's in love with me. This time it's real!"

"But Kari dear, you told me that very same thing about Darrell. And about Wilfred. And T. J."

"But Tyler's different, Catie. This is real. I feel it in my heart. So does Tyler: He told me so."

Caitlin continued putting things in their proper place, saying softly, "Give it time, Kari. Give it time."

"It isn't nice to throw 'cold water' on something so beautiful," KariAn remarked, sounding like she was half disgusted with her roommate. "Wait

and see," she added. "You'll see for yourself that this time I'm in love. Really and truly in love."

"I'll wait, Kari. You told me once that I have more patience than anyone you know. So, waiting won't try my patience. Not in the least."

Glancing quickly at the clock on her dresser, KariAn exclaimed, "Oh, dear! I'm to meet Tyler at the campus library in exactly one minute. I'll never make it. I must run. See you later, Catie. And believe me, I do love Tyler."

Caitlin sighed as her roommate rushed out of the room and hurried away. Poor KariAn. So light; such a fickle heart. And poor Tyler, too! Love? KariAn was in love with love. She was a dreamer. A very pretty and extremely exciting vivacious dreamer who knew how to exert her charm and charisma until most of the young men found her almost irresistible. What a powerful dynamo she would be if she'd ever die out to KariAn and have the "old man of sin" eradicated and purged from her heart and life!

As she had done so many times since meeting KariAn, Caitlin prayed for her roommate now as she worked. KariAn had told her, (when she -- Caitlin -had asked her if she had ever been sanctified wholly and had had the carnal nature taken out, root and all) that she had consecrated her heart and life to the Lord and that she didn't believe in using such "obnoxious" terms as carnality, the old man, eradication and death to self.

And oh, how desperately Kari needed a death to self; a crucifixion of KariAn and a spiritual resurrection in Christ! Caitlin thought, as she prayed and wept over Kari.

An hour later, as she studied at her desk, Caitlin heard KariAn's excited voice calling her before she reached the door, even. Caitlin turned just as Kari burst into the room.

"Catie, Catie," she cried, breathless with excitement, "do me a favor, please. . . ."

Caitlin got up from her chair and stood beside the desk, facing KariAn but saying nothing. "Please, Catie, will you?"

"Will I what? I never promise until I know what I'm promising for."

"It's something you can do; really it is. Tyler wants me to go into the city with him this afternoon, and you know I have two classes then. So, will you cover for me? Please?"

"Cover for you? KariAn, that . . . that's. . . ."

"Oh, don't say it," Kari interrupted. "I think I know what you were going to say. But honestly, Catie, all you need to say is that I couldn't make it, when the teachers ask you where I am. I'll take care of giving them a convincing answer tomorrow in class."

"KariAn, I can't believe this! Am I hearing correctly? You want me to tell a lie, for you! I can't do it, Kari. I won't do it. That's dishonest. It would be a lie. And no liar will ever get into Heaven."

"But Catie, Tyler wants me to go. Look, if you'll do this for me I'll buy you that expensive book I heard you say you wished you could afford. And I'll take you out to that really fabulous Chinese restaurant and buy you anything you desire from their menu. Please, Catie. This means so much to me."

"Thanks, KariAn; but no. I'm not for sale. Oh Kari, how can you even think of doing something like this? It's like you're nailing Jesus to the cross afresh again. Don't you love Him? Are you really saved, KariAn? Really and truly, are you? Christians don't lie: They're made new in Christ. Their entire life, and their way of living, is changed. Let's get down and pray, my dear, and you ask the Lord to forgive you for this evil and this sin."

"I'll let you do the praying," KariAn answered haughtily. "I'm going with Tyler. I'll find someone else who'll cover for me. I was sure you wouldn't comply with my request; but I thought the offers I proposed may entice you. I'll never ask you again, I promise. And now, enjoy your studies. I must hurry. I believe Arlene will help me. She's dating Greg Trower. One good turn deserves another. See you later. Oh, by the way, I may be a bit late getting in tonight."

"Maybe you'd better tell this to the dorm supervisor, KariAn."

"I'll talk to her when I get in. She'll 'greet' me at the door. Rules! Ugh! You'd think we were a bunch of juveniles instead of responsible young adults."

"I'm thankful for rules, KariAn; they set boundaries and restrictions against what's wrong and undesirable and sinful and evil. Please, don't go," Caitlin pleaded. "Don't become a rebel."

"A rebel! Oh, Catie, I'm not a rebel."

"When one willfully violates a known rule, what else is he, KariAn?"

"In my heart I don't feel I'm a rebel, Catie. Now don't beg any more: my mind's made up; I'm going with Tyler. Bye," and KariAn was gone as quickly as she had come.

Caitlin stood in mute silence and dumb shock for a long time. Then she settled down at her desk once more and began to study. In her heart there was a deep inner peace, and from Heaven's throne she knew the Lord's smile of approval was resting upon her.