

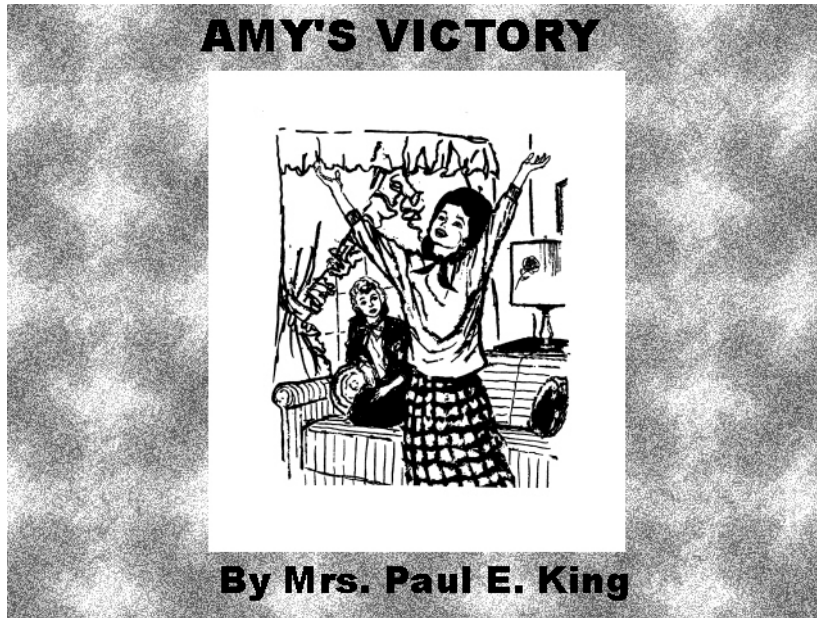
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AMY'S VICTORY
By Mrs. Paul E. King

Amy's long legs seemed to fly down the porch steps and across the lawn to the Jefferson's house three doors away. Rushing up the steps she pounded on the screen door and, panting from excitement, she called, "Mandie! Mandie, come here. Come here! I have something to tell you. Oh, I'm so excited!"

Amanda Jefferson, hearing the voice of her best and closest and dearest friend, hurried to the door and let Amy in, demanding with a smile that she "catch her breath first, and please sit down," before divulging the wonderful news, whatever it may be.

"Honestly Amy," Amanda declared with a giggle as she gave her friend a gentle shove toward an overstuffed chair, "you are going to be overcome with excitement one of these days, I fear. Or you'll have me being overcome. You're something else! And you're breathless too."

"That's because I'm so excited, Mandie. Oh, it's wonderful! I can scarcely believe it's true. But it is! It is!"

Amanda dropped down on the floor beside Amy's chair and patted her hand in a teasing way, saying, "Calm down, Amy. Calm down. I'm sure you'd excite the doctor if he'd take your pulse rate when you're like this." She finished on a laugh note.

"Oh, I know, Mandie; I am something else. Mom declares that I'll kill her with a heart attack some day unless I can temper my emotions a bit more and not come rushing into the house on a burst of 'atom energy,' as she calls my excitable outbursts. But I think she enjoys me just like I am; unless I catch her too off guard. Then it's almost like an explosive was detonated near her, and she jumps from fear and alarm. But what can I do, Mandie? I mean, I'm me/I wonder sometimes if I wasn't born with my genes jumping with this wonderful feeling. I have ever so many things that fill me and thrill me with this good kind of excitement. I think it's wonderful to be alive because, first of all, I'm a Christian. Just think of it--a child of God: This should make everybody so happy that they'd proclaim it from the house tops and from the top-most branches of the tallest trees."

Amanda patted Amy's hand again, saying softly, "Some of us were born with a less excitable personality. And while we feel every bit as happy and joyful as you over being born again and cleansed by God's Holy Spirit, we're just not able to demonstrate it in a loud way like you."

Amy straightened up in the chair. "Oh Mandie, I didn't mean that I thought you -- nor anybody else I know -- should demonstrate his or her feelings the way I do. Forgive me, if you thought I was inferring this. I've often wished I could express my soul's wonderful feelings and inner holy movings

of God like you do: you look like an angel as you stand with your hands raised toward Heaven and cry and wave your Kleenex. You'd be totally out of place trying to emulate me, or anybody else."

"A thing Amanda Jefferson will never do, God helping me. Now, what is that bit of great news?"

Amy sat on the edge of the chair and grasped Amanda's hands in hers. "I have the lead part in the school play. Can you believe it! Oh, Mandie, I wish you'd have signed up to take part."

Amanda was silent; totally and completely silent, saying absolutely nothing.

"Well . . .?" Amy could scarcely bear the silence. "Aren't you excited for me, Mandie? After all, getting the lead part is no little thing. Just think what this will mean!"

"What will it mean, Amy?" Amanda's eyes searched her friend's face earnestly. Thoughtfully.

"I've always wanted to be in one of the school plays," Amy declared. "But I didn't know if I was good enough. After all, some of these plays are really something -- French words; some Spanish, and oft times a generous amount of German expressions."

"And curse words and foul language," Amanda added softly on a sad note.

"Hardly," Amy countered in disbelief. "They wouldn't dare."

"Talk to Diane Hertz and Nathan Clothiss. . . ."

"Really? Are you kidding me, Mandie?"

"In no way, Amy. It's a fact."

"I . . . I guess maybe I'm . . . well, I guess I'm not as excited, if this is how things are."

"Maybe this year's play will be an OK play; I don't know," Amanda stated. "But Miss Milsap can be something else at times! And she directs and chooses the plays, I understand."

Amy got to her feet. "I'll soon know," she told her friend. "I'm to be at school to go over the part with the rest of the students who are in it."

"When? I mean what time?"

"Within forty-five minutes. But suddenly it doesn't seem nearly as exciting as it did. You remember Mrs. Frances, Mandie, and her class plays, when we were eight, nine, and ten? I just loved those plays. Hers always had a moral to them. Always."

"Without exception!" Amanda declared. "I was a butterfly one year. My 'job' was to bring more beauty into God's already beautiful garden."

"And I was a lady-bug," Amy laughed. "We were dressed so cute. Think of the hours of labor expended by our mothers to make our authentic looking 'garb.' I guess that is why I wanted to be in one high-school play before I graduated: Mrs. Frances was my ideal as a teacher."

"That's because she was honorable and fair and upright and a true Christian example for her pupils and students to emulate. I believe everybody loved Mrs. Frances. But you don't have her, Amy; not for this play!"

"Is that a threat?" Amy asked, laughing shakily. "Not really. A warning, perhaps."

"Oh dear! Well, I'll run on home and fortify myself with scripture and prayer before I encounter what may turn out to be anything but exciting. Pray for me, please."

"You can count on me, Amy. And I know you're not going to fail the Lord. I know this!"

Tears glistened in Amy's eyes. "Thanks, Amanda Jefferson," she said. "You're like a pillar of strength with your well-chosen, softly-spoken words. I'll call you when I get home from school, God willing."

"Thanks, Amy, I'll be praying for you. And I'll be waiting for your call too."

Amy walked home in a deeply thoughtful mood, realizing suddenly that the years since she was a little girl had brought some radical changes in the world. And in the schools. What would she do if the play was like Amanda had said it was?

It didn't take her long to decide: Squaring her shoulders and walking straight as a soldier, she knew what she would do. She would not sell out to the world and its gaudy baubles and worthless trinkets; indeed not! Never! Never! She loved the Lord with all her heart and mind and strength. Maybe she should not have signed up for a part in the first place

She walked straight to her room and shut the door. Pulling the opened Bible close to her chest, she prayed for guidance and courage to stand for right and uprightness. Then she hurried away to school.

Miss Milsap was waiting eagerly for her cast of students to arrive and shortly after Amy got there the teacher passed the books out, telling them that this, their initial meeting, was merely a "get-acquainted" time with the characters to be played and acted out in the musical.

"Let's give it a quick run-through," she said. "Robert, you open scene 1 with your lines. OK, let's go."

In no time at all, Amy found her part. Scanning the lines, she groaned inwardly. She couldn't believe what she read. But it was for real--in plain black ink, for real.

"Amy. Amy!" Miss Milsap was sounding impatient. "Watch the book; take your cue from Robert's last word -- important."

"Look, Miss Milsap," Amy said, getting to her feet and walking up to the teacher, "I can't say those lines."

"Why can't you say them?" Miss Milsap demanded angrily.

"Because I'm a Christian and I don't use curse words. And no slang words either."

"A Christian! Ha. Ha. What's a Christian, Amy? Those things are no more! By the time we're through with the church people they'll wish they'd been like those of us who don't believe in God, and don't believe in absolutes or morality. Now read your lines." It was an order.

"May I say something, please?"

"Make it speedy, then get busy with those lines in your leading role."

"I won't have a leading role, Miss Milsap. Nor any role. Here's the book. Like I said, I am a born-again -- born of God -- Christian. When the Lord Jesus Christ saved me and forgave me for all my sins I had a complete and radical turn-around: the things I one time loved and did I now hated, and the things I once despised and hated, I now love."

"Stop it! Stop it! Sit down! Sit down!" Milsap shouted. "You're a religious fanatic."

"I have peace in my soul, Miss Milsap. Do you have peace in your soul? Do you have peace with God? You may, you know. I love the Lord too much to violate His Word, and my conscience; to stoop to the level of cursing and swearing and using foul, filthy gutter talk. I am shocked to think that you would choose something with such foul and poor literary quality."

"I will choose what I want to choose, Amy. Now, be gone. I will find someone who will produce what I expect and demand from these lines. The words which you find so 'foul' and obnoxious are meant to define you -- who you are; your personality."

"Then I would have been playing a lie; I am none of these things. The Lord has changed me. I'm new in Christ. And I'm ready for Heaven."

"Out! Out, Amy! Now, on with the play," Miss Milsap shouted as Amy exited.

All the way home, her feet and legs felt like they scarcely touched the ground. She was sure that, to some degree at least, she knew how David

had felt when he killed the lion and the bear. The Lord had helped her to "kill a bear" by taking her stand, and she had come out with glorious victory and liberty and freedom of spirit. It was wonderful! She would call Mandie as soon as she got home and sum the outcome up in one word -- Victory. Mandie would understand. Yes, she would understand.