

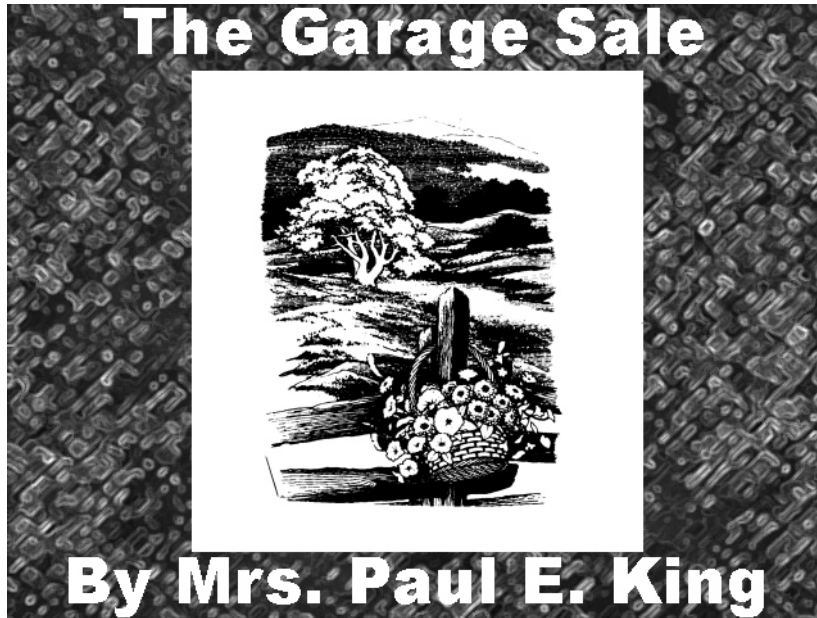
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**THE GARAGE SALE**  
By Mrs. Paul E. King

Cassie Lansford checked the address in the newspaper ad then turned the car down a side street, watching the house numbers carefully. This would, without a doubt, be the largest garage sale yet for her to find since Jerry's and her recent move to Millville.

She loved going to yard sales and garage sales. Truthfully, she had to admit, it was her favorite pastime. Sometimes she felt almost guilty for going to so many; then she consoled herself with the thought of her thriftiness: she had furnished a good part of her home with the items from garage and yard sales. No junk, either; but beautiful, sturdy and lovely things.

In Portland, she had known where to find the best and the most up-to-date items: Each year, in a lovely section of the city, a group of neighbors had an enormous garage-yard sale where their several-years' old furnishings, clothing and wall decorations were up for sale. Cassie still remembered her feeling of excitement at buying the beautiful and almost like-new sofa and two matching chairs for sixty dollars. It was a Godsend for Jerry and her: their old set was worn out, having gone through years of hard wear by themselves and their five children, now grown and in homes of their own.

She smiled as she recalled how she had found a coffee table and two matching end tables, all in wonderful condition, a few days after finding the sofa and chairs. Jerry had teased her about having a "nose" for garage sales like a beagle has for rabbits.

"Dear, dear Jerry!" she remarked aloud as she came to a sudden stop. The garage sale was in front of her and it was a big one, indeed; just like the ad said. It was in a lovely section of Millville, she noticed; the first house at the entrance of a cul-de-sac of exquisite looking English Tudor homes. The sale items spilled out of the huge garage onto the carefully manicured lawn.

Cassie dropped the car keys into her purse then stepped onto the carefully tended grass, feeling nearly dizzy with excitement. She had wondered, when they first arrived in Millville, if there would ever be another garage-yard sale like the one where she bought the sofa and chairs and, later, the coffee and end tables. And now she was sure she had found one.

She stood for a brief moment gazing at the many tables in the yard, trying to decide where to begin and which one to go to first. She had come early, as usual, so there was no shoving and pushing as yet. But instinct and reason told her that what she did she must do quickly: a sale of this size would soon have people everywhere, looking and buying.

She walked to a long table where plates and pitchers and dishes of every kind were displayed. Some were common, ordinary, "every-day"

dishes; others were of greater value. She even found several cut glass pieces of crystal. The price for each was unbelievably low. She knew immediately that she would buy them. There must be a mistake, however (she felt sure), on their cost.

Carefully she carried the two lovely cut glass dishes into the garage where three women were seated on folding lawn chairs; two of them were rather young looking; the third was graying at the temples.

"Good morning," she said brightly. "These are beautiful dishes," she added. "I want them. But I am wondering if you haven't made a mistake on the price.

"No mistake, lady," the youngest looking of the three commented quickly and dryly.

"Bu . . . but . . . this is cut glass . . ." Cassie remarked. "They're so beautiful."

"Right, they are cut glass. And that's what Mother's selling them for -- \$1.00 each."

Cassie was incredulous. "Th . . . thank you," she said. "I want them, please. Is it all right if I leave them here with you while I look around?"

"No problem at all. Take your time," the woman remarked.

"Thank you," Cassie replied as she browsed through the myriad things inside the garage, taking with her the things she knew that she and Jerry could make good use of. Soon she found herself again out on the lawn, with people coming from everywhere, it seemed. She found a lovely little rocking chair in A-1 condition for \$10.00 and a beautiful bedspread for a mere \$7.00.

Quickly, she carried her treasures in to the women, paid for them then took them to the car and hurried back to finish her looking. And then her eyes fell on a table nearly filled with trophies; among them half a dozen large trophies. They glistened and shone in the early morning sunlight.

Cassie felt stunned. What was the meaning of their sale? Why would anyone want to sell his/her trophies? After all, the mere sight of them was

representative of hard work, long hours of endurance and sacrifice and, most of all, they were symbols of achievement and accomplishment. Or could they have been merely overly extravagant awards for relatively inauspicious accomplishments?

She stood looking at the trophies so long until she became aware that the youngest looking of the three women from inside the garage was standing beside her.

'You're wondering why they're being sold,' the woman said matter-of-factly.

"Truthfully, I am. It seems rather strange," Cassie admitted, with a puzzled look on her face.

"They were our sister's." Again the woman's tone of voice was matter-of-fact.

"But why? I . . . I mean. . . . Well, I've never been into sports and such things," Cassie stated. "But . . . well, she must have worked hard to have earned these things. Especially these large ones."

"She did. She deserved every single trophy she got. She was nearing the top in her field. Then she met Julius. He took her down the wrong road -- drugs, alcohol, you name it. Today she's dead. Dead! He killed her. . . ."

"Oh no! No!" Cassie cried, feeling tears trickle down her cheeks.

"She overdosed!" the young woman said bitterly. "He's responsible for her death. Mother can't bear the sight of those trophies; we're selling them."

"But who will buy them?" Cassie asked innocently. "How could anyone display a trophy if it wasn't earned?"

"I don't know," came the woman's reply. "I only hope, for Mother's sake, that someone will show up today and take the whole lot home with them. Mother's selling all her belongings -- I mean she's selling all of our sister's belongings. The rocking chair you bought, and the bedspread and cut glass dishes were all hers. She was planning on marrying a fine young man until Julius came along and broke everything up. The chair and spread and dishes

were all to have been a part of the home she and Anthony would have shared."

"Oh, I'm sorry. So sorry," Cassie cried, as she placed her hand on that of the young woman. "I'll be praying for you. And I hope someone will take all of these away today. But, you know, the trophies that matter most aren't made of brass. Nor gold or silver."

"I . . . I guess I don't understand what you mean, nor what you're trying to tell me," the woman answered truthfully.

"I am a Christian," Cassie said softly. "I know my sins are all forgiven and that my heart is pure and holy and clean and that I'll go to Heaven when I die. Jesus, my Savior and Lord, told us to not lay up for ourself treasures on earth; rather, He said we are to lay up treasures in Heaven, where moth and rust do not corrupt and where thieves cannot break in and steal. The Christian's trophies are the men and women -- the souls -- he or she has won to Christ. Do you know Jesus, my dear? Have you made peace with God by being converted -- born again?"

"I never heard of this," the young woman admitted sadly. "We have all felt so . . . so . . . desolate and . . . and alone since Candace died. I can't describe the feeling. And at times, we have feared for Mother's sanity. She insists that everything -- I mean everything! -- that belonged to Candace and pertained to Candace must be gotten rid of."

"She's hurting, my dear. And grieving," Cassie replied tearfully. "She must have loved your sister very deeply."

"Too deeply. But I guess we all did. You see, she came along late in life. And . . . and three weeks after Father died. Quite naturally, Candace buffered Father's sudden death for Mother. And for all of us, really." The woman sighed. Then, in an almost inaudible undertone, she added, "How I wish Mother had something to anchor on to! She's so depressed."

Cassie smiled through her tears. Touching the arm of the woman lightly, she said, "I have a Friend who can help your mother. He is kind and loving and full of compassion. Do you suppose your mother would listen to me if I tell her about my Friend? He can help her."

"She may," the woman answered.

"Just call me Cassie," Cassie told her. "I'm Cassie Symons. My husband and I just moved here a few weeks ago."

"And I'm Rosetta; Rosetta Claymer. Come, I'll introduce you to my older sister and to our mother"

Cassie walked back into the garage where the introductions were made, after which Rosetta said, "Cassie has a Friend whom she says can help you, Mother. She'd like to talk to you."

Without hesitation, Mrs. Fulbright got to her feet. "Follow me," she said to Cassie as she walked to the door leading inside from the attached garage. "I knew, the instant I saw you, that you were a Christian and that you loved the Lord. I am a prodigal, and prodigals must sometimes wallow in the muck and the mire of the hog pen before they come to themselves I've wallowed long enough. Too long, really. I'm ready to repent and to return to Father's house.

"God sometimes uses drastic measures and means to get our attention and to try to draw us back to Himself," Mrs. Fulbright continued as she led the way into a beautifully-furnished great room and motioned Cassie to a chair.

"I one time knew the Lord," she admitted. "I even worked for Him. I played the piano for various evangelistic singers on the West coast. Then I went abroad to study music in depth. That's where and when I turned about-face and took the broad way, along with the multi-talented musician who was by then my husband and who became the father of my three daughters.

"God had to give Jonah a journey in a whale's belly before he was ready -- and willing -- to obey His voice; and He allowed the prodigal to eat husks with the swine before that poor man came to his senses and stripped off his cloak of vanity and pride and returned home to his father's house, penniless and filthy and in rags. But for me, it took a more radical and drastic measure -- my Candace had to die. Die! A drug addict and an alcoholic!" Mrs. Fulbright's slender shoulders shook as she finished speaking.

"You cannot undo the past, my dear," Cassie said kindly and softly "But we can make a new start; a brand new beginning."

"I'm ready," Mrs. Fulbright declared. "If I had been a Christian mother, how different things would be! I'm sure Candace would not be in her grave. Please pray for me. God sent you here to help another of His prodigals to get back into the fold."

Weeping, Cassie hurried over to the side of the kneeling, sobbing, penitent woman.