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KENDRA'S VICTORY
By Mrs. Paul E. King

All the way over to Mrs. Filbert's house, Kendra could hardly sit still. She was never so excited in all of her life. At least she couldn't remember of ever having been so excited before.

"Can't you relax, honey?" her mother asked quickly. "You're making me feel nervous."

Kendra laughed and squeezed her back tightly against the seat in the car, saying, "Honestly Mother, I've never been so excited. Not ever! Just think of it, an opportunity to play before ever so many people, including one of the great masters himself! It seems unreal. I never dreamed, when I began taking piano lessons at five from Mrs. Filbert, that it would materialize into something so . . . well, so big and so great. Oh, Mother, it's almost like I'm dreaming; like I'm on a cloud or . . . or. . . ."

Mrs. Brisco placed a hand gently on her daughter's arm and said softly but quickly, "Kendra my dear, come down off that cloud and stop dreaming. I know you're excited; this is understandable. But honey, my advice to you is that you'd better do some earnest praying, lest the Lord allow you to 'fall' off that soft cloud and bring you down to harsh and painful reality. It's pride that precedes destruction and the haughty spirit before a fall, the Bible says.

"It's true, you are an excellent pianist. And you were known as a child prodigy -- sometimes I wish you had never been told this, though. But you must always keep in mind that it is nothing you have done, child -- nothing! Your gifts and talents have all come from God. And unless you keep this in your mind, and in your heart, at all times, and give God all the praise and the glory, you may be left alone and on your own one of these days. Maybe even tonight, honey."

Kendra sat bolt upright on the edge of the seat, exclaiming, "Mother, don't say such a thing! Please!"

"Being confident in one's self and one's abilities to the exclusion of God is extremely dangerous and unwise, Kendra. 'the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding,' so states Job 28:28. I'm not inferring that you are evil, honey; but I am afraid that you will become self-confident and filled up with pride, and this is evil."

Kendra eased back against the seat in silence. Mrs. Brisco looked straight ahead, praying silently but earnestly that her words would have the effect upon her daughter which she felt were needed for the moment. And they did: Kendra closed her eyes and prayed.

"Mother," she finally said, "thanks. I think you know me better than I know myself. I'm honestly not proud -- that was all taken out when I was

sanctified wholly. But maybe I was beginning to trust my own ability more than I realized. With all that almost ceaseless practicing, I have the two selections memorized."

"But all of that can change in a moment of time, my dear, unless you rely totally upon the Lord. I've known some rather super brilliant people whose brilliance 'evaporated' when they faced an audience for the first time. And you must keep in mind that others will be playing too. Kendra, strive to please the Lord; please Him alone! Whether you get the scholarship or not, play to please the Master of all masters. He may not want you to go to that college where the scholarship would place you and take you."

"But Mother, I would be studying under some of the 'greats'! I could learn ever so much more than I know now, wonderful and great as Mrs. Filbert is and has been."

"You could also learn things which would displease the Savior greatly and cause you to lose out spiritually in your soul and backslide. Not always, the thing or things that appear wonderful and great are for the greatest good and best. Many times, these are the things that bring damnation to the soul."

Kendra listened patiently, feeling her excitement gradually settling down to a calmer reality.

"Your father and I know a man whose shallowness and extreme worldly mindedness today is attributable solely to the school from which he got his training; his education.

"By worldly standards, he's a great success. But by God's Biblical standards he's a pauper. He was one time traveling the narrow road to glory - the highway of holiness and separation from the world -- but the very famous school from which he derived his education and skills for his particular vocation was his downfall spiritually. Today, he makes fun of the things he once believed in and embraced and, were you to meet him on the street, you wouldn't recognize him as having one time been a child of God. It's one of the saddest things your dad and I have ever gone through, because his wife and he were once our closest and truest Christian friends. We are praying for God's will to be done in this concert tonight, and only God's will."

Kendra sighed. "I really was hoping that. . . . Oh, Mother, you are so very right again. Even though I was hoping the Lord would help me to get that scholarship, I don't want it if it will displease Him." By now, tears tumbled down Kendra's cheeks. "I love the Lord so much," she added, "that I do want only His will. Amen and amen, my wonderful Savior and Master."

Mrs. Brisco reached over and patted her daughter's arm affectionately, saying gently, "And the Lord will be with you."

Sitting up straight and wiping the tears from her eyes, Kendra said, "I'll do my best -- for Jesus' sake -- and leave the outcome with Him. Christian colleges need Spirit-filled teachers. . . ."

Mrs. Brisco felt tears come to her eyes. Softly, she said, "They certainly do, my dear. Spirit-filled and capable teachers. Now here we are, at Mrs. Filbert's house. She wanted you to go through your two pieces one last time before the presentation tonight, you said. So, when shall I come back for you?"

"Mrs. Filbert will bring me home, God willing. She wants to go by the school auditorium to take care of some last minute details, she said, and since she'll go right by our house, she'll drop me off then."

"We'll be praying for you, Kendra. Until later, God bless you."

Sitting in the crowded school auditorium later that evening, Mr. and Mrs. Brisco prayed silently for their daughter, asking God to take complete control of Kendra and to make her a living testimony for His honor and glory.

One by one, as they were introduced, the musicians took their place at the piano and played the carefully-chosen selections. It was obvious to all who were assembled that the community had some thoroughly capable and well established future-great pianists in their midst and among them.

Suddenly Kendra was introduced. With a look of serenity and peace written over her face and upon her countenance, she bowed graciously and thanked the applauding audience, then seated herself at the piano and began playing the concerto which Mrs. Filbert had selected for her.

Starting with what sounded like the soft ripple of a gentle, laughing and peaceful stream, she carried her audience along the musical journey where soft lovely notes went from laughing streams to more rapid currents and on into turbulent waters, all of which crescendoed at the top of a mighty waterfall and went thundering over it, falling, at the bottom, into a less tempestuous stream and winding its musical way again into the "harbor" of the laughing, merry stream.

It was beautiful and beautifully rendered. Mr. Brisco reached for his wife's hand. Claspng it in his big, strong one, he whispered in her ear, "Quite a musician, our daughter!"

"What God hath wrought!" she quoted back to him.

He squeezed her hand and held it tightly as Kendra finished the final note of the concerto then started softly into a beautiful, subtle key change and began playing the lovely old hymn Mrs. Filbert had arranged for her, at her request. Again, the audience was carried along on a musical journey; this time on a sacred journey to Calvary, where the crucified Christ suffered and died for the sins of the world then rose again as Conqueror over sin and death and hell. The final note was a note of triumphal victory.

Kendra stood to her feet. The ovation that ensued was thunderous. She bowed graciously again then walked off stage and disappeared behind the heavy burgundy curtains to the continuation of applause.

Mrs. Filbert, waiting back stage, hugged her soundly. "You were wonderful, Kendra!" she exclaimed. "Perfect. Perfect. Everything was perfect. You didn't miss a note nor a single thing I taught you to do. I'm proud of you. It's students like you who make me realize just how worthwhile my teaching is. I do wish you'd change your mind about the scholarship, however. In my inmost being, I feel you'll get it."

"Thanks, Mrs. Filbert, I really appreciate you and your concern. But I don't want a scholarship to that liberal arts college. I have a feeling, since praying before coming here tonight, that the Lord wants me to go to a good Bible college instead."

Patting Kendra gently on her shoulder, Mrs. Filbert said softly: and with tears in her eyes, "I believe you're right. Yes, I believe you're right. I would be

grief-stricken and heartbroken to see you change from the sweet little Christ-loving, God-honoring girl I've always known into a hardened unbeliever and egotist. Yes, dear Kendra, there are far more important things, and things of far greater value than the worldly honor of a scholarship. You have made a wise choice."

"Thank you, Mrs. Filbert. In my heart, I know it is God's choice. And now, if you don't mind, I'm going to go along the hallway here to the doorway that leads out into the main auditorium. I want my parents to know as soon as the recital/concert is over. Come by the house later on, God willing. There'll be a buffet of goodies. Mother said she invited you. I'll see you . . ." and Kendra hurried away. She could scarcely wait to tell her parents.