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**THE HEART MUST TRUST**  
**By Mrs. Paul E. King**

Laura walked on aimlessly, her mind tormented to its utmost. Near-despair flooded her soul. In blessed relief, tears began falling, nor did she try to stop their flow. Tears, like prayers, she knew, could be a mighty outlet of relief. A channel of real blessing, too.

She found a willow and dropped to the ground beneath its long, lithe branches. Leaning her head against its strong stout trunk she cried until the fountain of her tears was completely dried up and spent.

"Andy. Oh Andy!" she moaned upward into the weeping branches of the willow. "I can't believe it. I won't!"

Resolutely she dried her tears and smiling, as if to wipe away forever the last vestige of her nightmarish discovery, she stood up.

She leaned her back against the tree, which seemed only too eager to offer its supportive trunk to her weary body, then, sighing deeply, she looked about her. The banks and hedgerows along the lane were liberally starred with pale exquisite primroses forcing their way through dead leaves and grasses. Daffodils with their long, narrow blue-green leaves, made a sunny-bright welcome sight as they bloomed in great profusion along the high banked path to the church.

Now, she realized suddenly, was the time when fox cubs were born. How Andy had delighted himself in finding the dens and watching (from a safe distance) as the playful little fellows poked their furry, inquisitive heads outside and glanced warily about them at the great wide wonderful world beyond their infant habitat! Andy! How her world revolved around the boy! Quickly she thought back to the day the Welfare Department had called her.

"Mrs. Ashley," the woman began, "we need help." She came straight to the point. "I'm Maribel Wilson from the Welfare Department. Your friend Mrs. Amy Holiday works here. . . ."

Whatever could they want of her? Laura wondered.

"We have a child here. No one wants him," Maribel continued, honestly and forthrightly.

"A . . . child?" Laura had questioned softly, dazedly.

"He's a ten-year-old, Mrs. Ashley," Maribel went on. "Incorrigible and hateful. He's quite a skilled thief.

Thief! Laura cringed at the word. She felt as though her heart had ceased beating. She exhaled her breath as Maribel's voice continued.

"Andy's not all bad." The woman stressed the "all." "What he needs more than anything is love and a proper home. Proper upbringing. You understand what I'm trying to say, don't you, Mrs. Ashley?"

Laura stuttered and stammered, her response coming out in a questioning, faltering, "Ye . . . yes. At least I think I do."

Maribel's voice, soft and appealing with a decided business tone to it, said frankly, in more of a positive note than a questioning one, "You'll take the boy then! Good. Very good! I'll bring him to you this afternoon; immediately after twelve o'clock lunch hour."

Laura stood as one glued to the hallway carpet when she put the receiver back in place. Sudden panic and fear seized her with almost staggering proportions. Then a Scripture verse flooded her thinking. It was like a great calm after a violent storm. "The steps of a good man [or woman] are ordered by the Lord."

Joyfully and tearfully she fell to her knees. "Thy will, dear Lord; not mine," she prayed. "Only make me a blessing to this boy and help me to win him to Thee."

With a light heart and a quick step, she hurried upstairs and threw open the guest room windows. At almost the same time, she folded the snowy-white heirloom bedspread and slipped it into the cedar closet, taking from the closet a nautical, blue-colored boyish-looking spread and spreading it over the bed. It had been John's favorite before he went away to college and then married later on.

Quickly she replaced the dainty little whatnots that adorned and decorated the guest room with some of John's old treasures that she had put in one of the deep dresser drawers in her bedroom for "memory's sake." Before hurrying downstairs, she surveyed the room with a critical eye. A sudden, almost overwhelming, feeling of sweet nostalgia stole through her being. Why . . . why it looked almost like it did when John was a little fellow growing up. But wait, one thing was missing!

Another trip to the "Memory Drawer" in her bedroom and a quick change of mottoes and Laura saw that the room was as it used to be before John left the home "nest" to try his wings and make his own way in life.

She had gone thoughtfully downstairs and steeped a cup of bracing hot tea and sat down to enjoy its delicious flavor. Whatever would John and Margaret think of her? She laughed softly aloud as the question projected itself. And Paul? A tear slipped down her cheeks and dropped into the cup of now tepid tea. Paul would have been proud of her. "Take the boy, honey," he would have said. "God sent him to you."

John and his lovely wife Margaret, would have been proud too, cautioning her not to "overdo," however.

Laura had turned the cup round and round, remembering how lonely she had been since the sudden heart attack had taken Paul from her. The comfortable home he had provided for them and which they had shared for better than thirty years, seemed unbelievably empty and as nothing with his passing.

They had had a wonderful life together, sharing joys and sorrow and drinking its cup of both sweet and bitter, but in everything Christ had been uppermost. Could it be that God was sending Andy to help her forget her loneliness? she had wondered that day.

Looking back in retrospect now, she remembered Andy's arrival. He had been sullen and uncommunicative at first and for several weeks she all but despaired of keeping him. Her close walk with the Lord was her only anchor during those trying days. But God was answering her prayers. She knew it then and she must continue to believe Him now . . . through her recent discovery.

She broke a blade of grass and wound and unwound it around her finger in a mechanical sort of way. She remembered the turning point in Andy's life.

She had missed him that evening, not being in the house, and had hurried down the garden path to the shed at the far end of the lawn. She opened the door and stepped inside, calling his name softly, lovingly. It was quite dark inside. Eyes glimmered like emeralds from the gloom and there

were barks of excited welcome as she bent to gather the bundle of brown puppy into her arms. Becoming aware of a movement nearby, she turned to face Andy.

The color drained from his face as he realized that his secret was out. He pled pitifully, "He was so little . . . nobody wanted him. . . ."

"But why didn't you bring him into the house, Andy?"

The color came flooding back into the boy's face. "You . . . you mean I may keep him? Honest?" he asked.

"Why not? This little fellow's a real pet, and he'll be our watchdog." They went towards the house, laughing as the small dog tumbled with delight.

"He looks just like a brown chestnut rolling about in the grass," Laura had commented. "How did you get him?" she asked quickly, eagerly, as she finished her supper preparations and watched Andy cradle the puppy in his arms.

"From Mike Howell. He's in my grade at school. His mother was going to get rid of the little fellow and Mike thought if I could keep him in our shed why . . . maybe . . . he could run over every once in awhile and see Marbles."

Laura stifled a laugh when she heard the puppy's name but her ears were acutely tuned to what Andy was saying.

"Mike an' I named him Marbles 'cause he rolls just like a marble when it's shot across the room. The reason I didn't tell you was . . . 'cause I was afraid you'd be like . . . like all the other women where I had to stay an' . . . an' not let me keep him."

Laura had gone to Andy and wrapped her arms about him, puppy and all. Looking down at his besmudged face she said, "I love my boy! I'm sure God sent him to me, and of course he may keep his puppy! By all means! Now here," she said, finding an old bowl and handing it to him, "this is for Marbles. His very own bowl to drink from. You'll have to paint his name on the side. . . ."

That had done it! Andy's delight over having something he could call his very own had a transforming effect upon him and shortly thereafter he had asked Laura how to be converted. Oh, that was such a happy evening when Andy, truly sorry for his sins and wholly repentant, prayed until he was saved.

"Your life was so different," he told Laura later, "that I got this strange kind of hungry feeling in my heart and now I'm . . . like you, all happy and joyful and so at peace."

The boy's deportment was different from that very instant. Laura rejoiced in the change and when, a few days later at the supper table, she told Andy about sanctification, or heart purity, and he sought and obtained the fullness of the blessing, her cup of joy overflowed.

The boy who had been branded incorrigible, hateful and mean and a thief, was transformed. His disposition was perpetually cheerful and sunny. He became a model child of true salvation. Not ever again did Laura have a problem with him. Why now? she wondered sadly. After nine wonderful years! There must be an explanation. He didn't steal the watch and the orchid from where he worked. He didn't! Her heart reassured her that there would be an explanation. She must trust. She would trust!

After a season of prayer, Laura hurried home. "If thou canst believe, thou shalt see. . . ." Ah, therein lay the secret. Believe, if you want to see! With a trusting, light heart, she entered her kitchen.

"Mother! Where were you?" It was Andy. He rushed to her and placed his mannish hands on her slender shoulders. "You were crying!" he exclaimed in concern. "What happened? I was worried when I came home and couldn't find you. I got off work a bit early tonight. Here," he said, reaching in his pocket and extending the watch toward Laura. "It's a cheap one but it's the best I could do . . . with the money you insisted upon my saving for Bible College safe in the bank." He laughed softly and hugged her warmly.

"Oh, Andy!" Laura exclaimed. "Andy! I . . . I'm so happy I . . . I'm going to cry."

Andy touched a finger to her nose ever so lightly. "Better not do that," he ordered teasingly. "Mr. Carbolt let me off early so I could take you out to Bittner's Buffet tonight and you can't go looking all weepy and red and sad."

Laura stood speechless. Hurrying to the refrigerator, Andy was soon back. "Here's an orchid, Mother; a gift from the Carbolts and me . . . to my wonderful mother! I know that Mother's Day isn't until tomorrow but I thought I'd like to celebrate two days instead of one. You've made my life here a little heaven. . . ."

"Th . . . thank you, Andy . . . Son! Thank you so much."

Squaring his already broad shoulders Andy said, "Someday I'll care for you, Lord willing. It will be in a parsonage though, with my wife and me. Now run along and get dressed and, Happy Mother's Day, in advance."

Laura tripped lightly up the stairs. In spite of her age, she felt strangely young. "Thank You, Father dearest," she praised, "for my two sons; and thank You, for calling them both into the ministry."

As she dressed, she knew why Andy was sent to her home.