

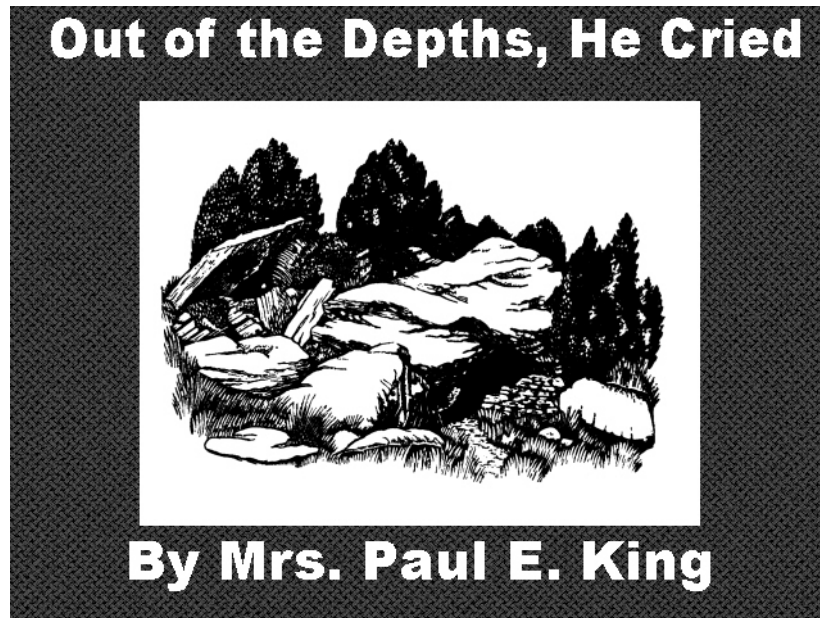
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OUT OF THE DEPTHS, HE CRIED
By Mrs. Paul E. King

Kohlman looked around: stones, stones and more stones. Everywhere he looked, stones. It was hot at the bottom of the pit. Desolate too. So desolate. How did he get down so far? he wondered bitterly, longing desperately to get out.

He looked up. The sun shone down. It was hot. Hot. The stones burned his feet and his hands. He was alone. So alone. Where were his friends?

His eye searched the wall of rock that surrounded him, imprisoning him. Jagged crags jutted up above him. Maybe, just maybe, if he tried to scale the wall He'd always been adept at getting himself out of any situation that confronted him, hadn't he?

He looked up again. The solid granite wall seemed to mock him. He'd tried to climb out many times. But it was futile. Impossible. The sides of the wall cut his feet and his hands. Blood stained the walls. His blood. He couldn't get out.

He wanted out. Oh, how he wanted out! How desperately he wanted out! But he couldn't: the walls imprisoned him. The sun scorched him. The echo of his cry mocked him.

He thought of his parents then; his father especially. He had violated every rule and law of the home to "exert" his authority. Oh, for just one look on the face of his father! Just once, to hear his voice again. What a fool he had made of himself. He was like the prodigal son in the Bible. No, he was the prodigal son. Why had he thought he knew more than his father? Book learning; that was it. He'd been to college; graduated with honors. High honors. Worldly-wise honor. He became a law unto himself, discarding and disregarding everything noble and high and lofty he'd ever been taught beneath his father's roof.

Subtly and slowly, he started sliding down into the pit. It was hilarious at first; exciting too. He'd never before experienced such worldly pleasure and fun. Truth of the matter is, he hadn't noticed that the slide was taking him into the pit. He was too preoccupied with his many friends with whom he was experiencing and enjoying the pleasures of his new way of living. Not until he awoke after another night of revelry and debauchery did he realize that he was in the pit. Alone, in the pit.

"Hello." He called loudly, cupping his hands to his mouth. "Anyone up there?" he asked, as he looked upward. "Hey, can you hear me? I'm hopelessly imprisoned in this pit. Help! Help!"

"Quiet!" shouted a voice from the up-side. "I heard you," and leaning a little over the rim of the pit, the man repeated less noisily and loudly, "Be quiet. Sit down. Relax. Meditate. D'ya hear me? Meditate, I said."

"I want out!" came the loud, emphatic rejoinder from the floor of the prison.

"Hush! Hush! You're too noisy. Too loud. Meditate; it will take your mind off the pit. Sit down; fold your arms; close your eyes. Meditate. Get your mind on other things."

With an angry shout, the prisoner's voice floated upwards; up the granite wall to the rim of the pit; "I just want out! O-U-T! I need deliverance, not meditation; not folding of my arms nor. . . ."

"There's no help for you," echoed the voice from the up-side. "Pardon me for interrupting your sentence, but you're a hopeless case. Yes, indeed, a hopeless case. If you would take my advice and do as I say, you would forget your misery. You would be transported to a sea of mental tranquillity and forgetfulness."

"Who needs mental tranquillity and forgetfulness when he is imprisoned in a pit and can't get out? Who, I ask you?"

"See what I mean? You're hopeless. Hopeless! Good day."

"Please, help me. Help me!" His shout rose and fell, hitting the granite walls then bouncing back and forth in frightening echoes. Exhausted, Kohlman slumped to the pit's floor and wept, feeling helpless and doomed.

"Hey, you down there, in the pit! Look up! I can help you. . . ."

Kohlman jumped to his feet. Clawing at the granite walls he exclaimed loudly, "You can! Please, please, get me out of here."

"Listen carefully," came the voice from the edge of the pit. "First off, you have no self-esteem; none whatever. Get some self-esteem: a good dose of it. You'll never amount to anything nor get anywhere without self-esteem. You're low; anybody who's allowed himself to get into a pit such as you are in

has had to have gotten way down, low. If you'd have had self-esteem you'd never have dropped into this pit."

"But . . . but I've always been taught that . . . that self had to be crucified. With Christ. Self must die. One is not to think more highly of himself than. . . ."

"Ha! I know your kind: Sunday school stuff. Knock it off, Bud, if you want deliverance from the pit."

"But . . . the Bible says that Jesus Christ made Himself of no reputation and that He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death; even the death of the cross and. . . ."

"I said knock it off. We're living in a different day and age. My generation doesn't go in for the Sunday school and church teaching stuff: we believe that every man, woman, boy and girl is a god. We see our god everywhere -- in plants, trees, flowers. Everywhere. No more following rules that prohibit this thing and forbid that thing. We do what we want when we want and, since we no longer believe there is such a thing as sin, we have great self-esteem. Now, do you want out of the pit? If so, follow my instructions carefully and do what I say."

"But what about the Bible? It's the Word of God and, as such, I need to follow its teachings. Coming to think of it, failure to read and heed and obey that Holy Book, and failure to pray, were the two first steps downward into this horrible pit. What good is self-esteem when one is in a pit?"

"It will give you confidence to get yourself out, that's what! But seeing as how you're still 'tied' to your old, outdated beliefs, there's no way I can help you. Enjoy the sunshine, Bud, you're surely getting a lot of it down there," and the stranger passed on.

Kohlman bowed his head. Why, it had been years since he'd given any thought to what he'd been taught so faithfully and diligently as a child from the Holy Bible. And to think that he still remembered and recalled those verses!

A thrill shot through him as he remembered. Jesus warned about those who would come, bringing with them false doctrines and false, anti-Christ

teachings, hadn't He? Well, if he, Kohlman, knew anything, it was that he had just encountered two of those about which God's Word had stated clearly would make their appearance in the last days. Transcendental mediator and a New Ager, that's what those two were, sure enough. And God's Word had taught him to steer clear of them; to not follow them and their erroneous teaching.

"I'm sure I can help you, young man. Can you hear me?"

Glancing upwards, Kohlman saw a well-dressed, dignified-looking gentleman peering intently over the edge of the pit and looking down on him. "Yes," he replied, "I hear you. Oh, please, can you help me out of this horrible pit into which I have slipped and fallen? I'll die down here unless someone can get me out."

"Now, now, young man, you only think you're in a pit. Think positive thoughts; get rid of those horrid negative thoughts. Now, tell yourself this: I will get out of this pit! I will! Begin lesson one in positive thinking.

Miracles happen when one thinks positive thoughts."

"But, sir, I need someone to lift me out. I'm a prisoner in this pit. I need a firm, strong physical hand and arm to help me out."

"Do as I tell you, young man: begin thinking positively. Expect a miracle."

"Sir, will you help me out? Please? I need a rescuer. A deliverer."

"Positive thinking is your answer. Heed my advice. Do as I say." Drawing his expensive suitcoat neatly to his well-built chest, he shrugged his broad shoulders and vanished from sight, muttering as he went.

Kohlman became desperate: he needed help; a hand to pass a rope down to him; something to get him out. He was slowly dying from thirst. His lips were cracked and bleeding from the lack of water and the intense burning of the scorching hot sun. He wouldn't last much longer, he knew. Oh, if only he could get out. Sobbing, he sank onto the hot, rocky floor, feeling like he was going to die.

"Son. Son."

Looking up, he saw a Man. "Yes," he sobbed.

"I've come to help you."

"How did You get down here? I mean, well. . . ."

"Get up, son. Take My hand."

'You . . . You're bleeding! You . . . You're bruised!"

"For you, son. Yes, for you. I will take you out of this horrible pit. Take My hand."

"Oh! Oh! Those are . . . nail prints. I . . . I can't take Your hand, lest I . . . I hurt You more!" Great sobs shook Kohlman's body.

"Scars, Kohlman, scars. The greatest pain you can inflict upon Me is to reject and spurn My proffered love and to resist and refuse My intense desire and willingness to liberate you from this pit of sin and shame. Come, take My hand: I will get you out."

Tearfully, Kohlman took the bleeding, outstretched, nail-scarred hand.

"Wait!" the Deliverer cried. "You are too weak; too worn," and stooping, He lifted the man and carried him, like a lamb, across His shoulder, up the side of the granite cliff.

"You are free now, Son. Free. See, I have delivered you with My Blood and by My Love. Go, and sin no more."

Trembling with joy and wonder, Kohlman cried, "My Lord and my God! Henceforth and forever, I will serve Thee and love Thee. I will follow Thee from this day until I die. Thou only, Lord, canst deliver from sin. Out of the pit, I cried, and Thou heardest my cry and came to me. What a Savior! What a Deliverer and what a God! My God!"