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**THE GENTLE HEART**  
**By Mrs. Paul E. King**

The sun streamed through the windows of Holly High with shafts of shimmering gold. A kind of drowsiness and good-to-be-alive feeling stole warmly over me. I slouched farther down in my desk seat behind Alan McQuinn, the lanky six-footer in our class, and propped my math book up in front of me in pretense of study, then I let my eyelids do what came naturally at the time.., droop ever so gently over my eyes.

Alan was so tall and his shoulders so athletic and broad, I felt perfectly secure from Mr. Heckler's penetrating stare.

The drowsiness increased and the sun's warm rays were an added incentive to keep my eyes closed.

Mr. Heckler was saying something or other about  $A$  equaling  $B$  minus  $C$  when I totally succumbed to my state of inertia.

I must have dozed (or could I have slept? I wondered foggily) for when I came to myself and back to the Junior class of Holly High, it was with a jolt.

"You did it!" Mr. Heckler was shouting accusingly.

I sat bolt upright, wide awake. Very much awake. I saw his index finger point accusingly at Linda.

I jammed my book together and slammed it on the desk as Linda's soft voice answered tremblingly, "I didn't, Mr. Heckler. I really didn't!"

I don't know exactly what happened to me after that but I do know one thing, I felt as if my insides were boiling. My face burned like fire, as did my heart. With clenched fists, I got to my feet.

"Mr. Heckler," I began loudly, "if Linda says she didn't, she didn't."

"Who asked your opinion, young man?" the teacher shouted sarcastically.

"No one asked my opinion, but I'm giving it anyhow. Linda's my twin. I know her better than any of you know her. She's real! No pretense about her. She . . . she's a real Christian."

"Sit down!" Mr. Heckler ordered. "No. NO!" he continued, shouting. "Go to the principal's office this minute. Both of you!"

"Gladly!" I exclaimed, flinging the words out of my mouth as my legs made quick strides for the door.

As we exited from the classroom I paused in the doorway and, facing Mr. Heckler, I glared at him. His face was white with anger as I'm sure mine was.

"Oh, Lynn," Linda began tearfully as we marched unceremoniously toward the principal's office, "why did you do it? Why? I'm not guilty. God knows it and that's all that matters. He'd have worked it out for me."

I calmed down slightly.

"No one . . . not even Mr. Heckler . . . is going to talk to you and shout at you and accuse you in that way, Linda Hill. Why don't you stand up for your rights occasionally?" I asked in sudden disgust. "You're too meek . . . and . . . gentle. Mr. Heckler's type will walk all over you."

Bright tears glistened in Linda's eyes. When she spoke, her voice was all soft and mellow and calm. Typical Linda, I thought, not knowing whether to be pleased or displeased with her.

"Lynn," she said kindly, "have you forgotten the Scriptures completely?"

Her question was poignant. It hit me right through the heart. I winced. Not outwardly, but inwardly.

"Don't you remember what I Peter 2:33 says about Christ?" She began quoting it, 'Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.' Oh, Lynn," she cried, "surely you haven't forgotten everything we learned and used to say together in church! I was so proud and happy to walk down the church aisle beside you and to quote all those verses with you. . . ."

Her voice trailed off, but a dagger seemed to have been plunged into my heart.

We walked in silence to the principal's office, our footsteps making low, hollow, muffled sounds down the hallway. My heart, however, was far from being silent. It beat wildly, loudly and rapidly.

I cast a sideways glance at my petite sister whose face wore a look of perfect resignation and serenity. Kind of a Romans 8:28 look, I thought, wishing for all the world that I could be more like she was.

I tried to brush the feeling aside with the rationalization that boys were meant to be different than girls . . . a bit more hard and not nearly so soft and easy-going . . . but try as I might, the feeling persisted and the Scripture about Jesus being "led as a lamb before the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth," kept thumping its way into my muddled brain and mind

Jesus was a man, I realized suddenly, and He was neither hard-boiled nor a sissy. He was gentle and meek and loving with children; tender and full of compassion with the sick, the infirm and afflicted, and He was kind and understanding with the troubled, and a friend of sinners, all the while. He was hard on dead, dried-up professors of religion. . . .

At thought of that I winced again, seeing myself as in a mirror.

"Here we are," Linda said, breaking in upon my heart musings.

"Scared?" I asked for nothing better to say.

"Not really, Lynn. I'm not guilty of copying so I've nothing to fear. Now, if I were guilty. . . ."

So that was what Mr. Heckler had accused Linda of doing! A smile twisted the corners of my mouth. Linda copying! How absurd. How utterly absurd and ridiculous! One thing was sure, Mr. Heckler didn't know my twin! Not at all.

I knocked lightly on the principal's door, and opened it for Linda to precede me at Mr. Kettering's summons to enter.

He was seated behind his mammoth and impressive looking desk and wore an equally impressive smile as we entered and he bid us be seated. He looked from Linda to me and back to Linda again. "Trouble?" he asked in a not-too-stern tone of voice as he slid some papers into the middle desk drawer.

I began to stutter something or other but Linda's soft voice came out soft and clear. "Not really, Mr. Kettering. That is, it need not have been trouble. I'm not a trouble maker. All that type of thing was taken out of my heart when the Holy Spirit came in and sanctified me wholly. I have been sent here for supposedly copying another's material. But I didn't, Mr. Kettering."

Mr. Kettering looked at Linda for a long time, then he broke out in another of his impressive smiles. "Case is dismissed," he said simply. "Your record's clean, Linda. I've observed you for nearly three years and beside your top honors and excellent grades, you have a spotlessly clean record in every respect. Mr. Heckler's a . . . ah, a bit hard to please at times. Now," turning to me, he asked, "why are you here, Lynn?"

I shuffled my feet nervously and groped for words.

"What happened?" he asked gently again.

Failing to find words that would sort of soften what needed told but which I was ashamed to say, I blurted the truth. "I'm here because I got angry at Mr. Heckler for accusing my sister of something she didn't do. I . . . I told him off!"

Mr. Kettering thumped his thumb and forefinger on an ink blotter on the desk and studied me momentarily, a wry half-smile playing at the corners of his mouth. "You would do well to find what it is your sister has, Lynn," he said in a calm, even voice. "Now you may go," he said, rising and escorting us to the door.

Linda smiled. "Thank you, Mr. Kettering. You have been most kind," she said.

"Keep up the excellent work, Linda, and good luck to both of you," the principal said. Turning to me, he tapped me on the shoulder. "Why not pattern after Linda, Lynn? You'll never be sorry that you did. The Christian life is the best kind of life. The only life. . . ."

I was glad when school was dismissed for the day. I felt miserable inside. I, who had professed to know and love the Lord, had had a carnal combustion of the first and highest magnitude. What made it so humiliating

was the fact that I had had no previous warning whatever that this awful thing was going to explode within me.

I knew beyond the least shadow of a doubt that my testimony hereafter would be as "sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal" before my classmates.

I was humiliated. Terribly so. And it was this shame and humiliation . . . that I had crucified my Lord afresh and anew . . . which led to my deep and genuine repentance over my carnal explosion.

As soon as I reached home I hurried to the bedroom I shared with Ted, my older brother who was not yet home, and closed the door.

My knees hit the floor like a sack of salt and my eyes became fountains of tears. I was sorry. Oh, I was sorry! I told the Lord every bit of it, not trying to hide nor conceal a single thing from His penetrating and all-seeing eye; and when I knew and felt all over me that He had forgiven my carnal explosion and taken me back into His fold, I sought earnestly after a cleansed heart. A heart full of Divine Love; purged, purified and sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

I don't know how long I prayed. That is inconsequential and insignificant; the fact is, He came within . . . to abide in me. I was sanctified wholly. The quick temper was gone. Eradicated; as were all the traits of carnality.

I emerged from the bedroom whistling, singing, and praising the Lord.

Linda was passing through the living room. She paused and looked at me. Coming close, she laid her hand upon my arm. "I knew you'd make it, Lynn!" she exclaimed, bright-eyed with happy tears.

"Thank God, Linda, there won't be any more explosions! My heart is filled with Divine Love." I looked at her and smiled. "Know something!" I said. "Now we're truly identical again!"

"Let's always keep it that way, Lynn," she commented, hurrying away to get her work done.