

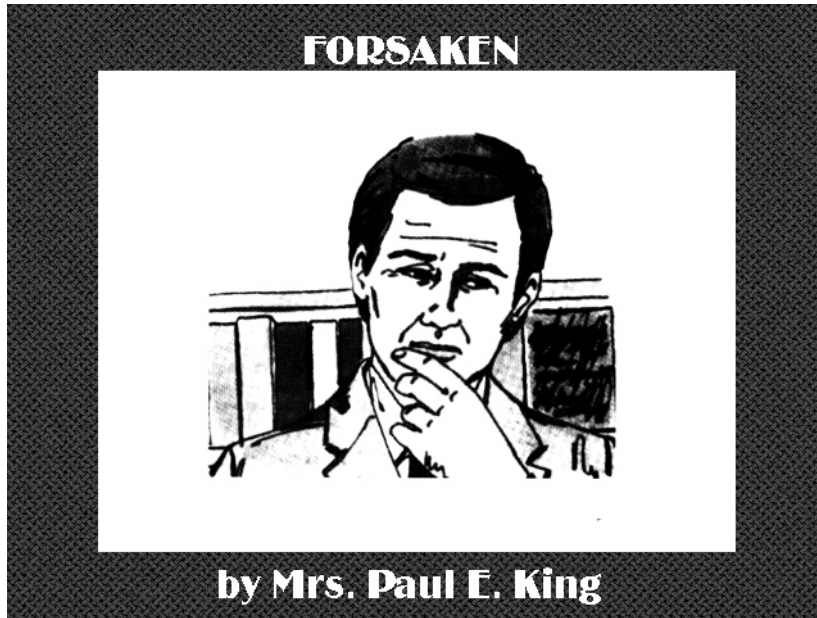
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FORSAKEN
By Mrs. Paul E. King

Allen sat wearily down behind the big oak desk in his office and numbly watched the last rays of the sun sink deep into the western horizon. He saw the many lights as they began to flicker and glow softly across the city. High on a par with his own office on the eleventh floor, he saw other office lights go on. Possibly the clean-up man, he thought, as he sat in the darkness toying with a pen.

His thoughts strayed momentarily to Linda. He hoped she wasn't too worried because he hadn't returned home. But he had, on different occasions, been this late or later before. She would, undoubtedly, think he had a client to interview and converse with.

The thought suddenly struck him that he hadn't eaten since he left home that morning. Funny, too, but he wasn't hungry. He loved to eat. Lately a lot of things just weren't running the way they once did. Funny, that such a little thing like one's boy quitting the office should so upset him.

He mopped from his brow the beads of perspiration that had suddenly formed. Lately he had frowned so much until his brow was becoming furrowed by wrinkles. "Smile again, dear!" Linda often teased over the breakfast table. "My handsome hubby's developing premature wrinkles -- caused by too many frowns." And it had been the truth. Smile? How could a man smile when his son walked out on his father's business? After he had trained him to be "top brass" and an experienced executive at that?

He became aware of an ugly feeling lodging deep within his breast -- hidden and unseen to all his employees but very real to himself. In fact, it was so ugly that it bordered on hate, and the sudden realization of the fact sent a chill through him. He used not to be like this. Perhaps if he started back to church it would help. Church? And he made a hasty retrospection. When was he last in church? One year? No, two!

"Oh, no!" he groaned aloud as he remembered that Easter service three years ago. How could he have been so careless about his spiritual welfare! Linda and Paul had gone faithfully, service after service, revival after revival. It was in one of the special revival services that Paul had gotten saved and sanctified and received his call to ministry.

"Dad," he said as he entered the office the next day, "I'll be quitting here. God has called me to preach, and while I don't see how I can do it, I must obey His voice. Mother said God never asks anything of us but what He also qualifies us for the task."

"Preach!" he heard his own voice shout that morning. "Why Paul, you're cut out to be a business executive. A president! Yes, president of this thriving

business in Millvale. What do you mean, preach? You can't do this to me, Paul. You can't! I've trained you and educated you for this job."

"I'm sorry, Dad," Paul had replied calmly. "I really appreciate all you did for me in a . . . a . . ." here his voice faltered ere he continued, "well, a temporal and financial way. But, Dad, never once have you done anything to keep me from going to hell. I have a soul that is going to live on and on somewhere in eternity; I made preparation to meet God last night. He forgave me of all my sins and crucified the awful carnal nature I had within me. The call to preach has been real. It's either preach or burn, Dad. I choose to preach the simple but beautiful gospel message that rescued my lost soul from hell and gave me a hope beyond the grave. Mother knows of a small, fundamental Bible School and she said she'd bake bread, rolls and cakes to help put me through."

Linda bake? And to help put Allan McGill's only son through a small holiness Bible school? The thought was embarrassing, revolting and mortifying to his vain, proud heart. That's when he told Paul he'd pay his way through the school.

As he cast all these things over in his mind, he began to realize the awful pride within his own heart. He hadn't rebelled merely because Paul was leaving the business, but because he felt too proud for this promising, energetic, young son of his to become a minister -- a holiness preacher at that, he mumbled to himself as he wondered what the men in his company would say when they found it out.

His head dropped heavily to his folded hands on the desk and he began sobbing -- long, hard, heaving sobs. His pride was deeply wounded and he was in a period of intense self pity so common to him. Suddenly a mental picture flashed before him: He saw Paul A. McGill -- named thus for his "noble" father -- sitting behind the President's desk in Millvale, cigarette and cigar butts scattered all over the heavily carpeted room with bottles of whiskey, gin, and wine lining the shelves in the elegantly furnished Company room. His face no longer bore a pure and innocent look, and his eyes were red and bleary. The look of intelligence was gone; in its place was a look of idiocy and blankness and, though still a young man, the marks of sin had turned his features suddenly old and haggard until it frightened Allan.

He dropped unhesitatingly to his knees and wept. "No! No, Lord! Not my boy!" he exclaimed loudly.

"Will you keep your hands off his life?" the voice of the Lord suddenly asked in the darkness of the big office room.

"Yes, Lord! Oh, yes!" Allan sobbed. "Only keep him from becoming a drunken sot and a human derelict. Keep him pure and clean and holy."

"Do you really mean this?" the voice of the unseen Guest asked, "and are you willing to let Me have him from here on out, until. . . ."

"Yes. Yes, Lord!" Allan sobbed. "And, Lord, can You have mercy on my poor backslidden soul? I have wandered far from Thee. I got my eyes off things eternal to things earthly. Oh! Be merciful to me a sinner."

On and on he prayed, confessing and repenting. The big clock on the square chimed eleven sweet musical chimes when Allen prayed through and was made a new creature in Christ. Rising to his feet, he turned the desk light on and cleared the highly polished desk of its ash trays and borderline pictures. After the last vulgar looking calendar was torn to shreds and lay in small pieces in the mahogany waste basket by his desk, Allan turned the light off and, locking the office door, slipped quietly down the marble hallway to the automatic elevator and down to the main floor.

As he stepped through the big revolving doors he inhaled deeply of the fresh crisp air. He looked all about him; everything seemed new and different. He smote his breast for joy. The myriads of lights across the city seemed to be rejoicing with him. As he walked, he heard the soft strains of an old hymn being played on a piano somewhere in the block. Tears welled up in his soft blue eyes and then fell to the sidewalk below.

He saw the light in the living room of his home and knew that somewhere inside Linda would be waiting to welcome him. She must have recognized his footsteps for the door burst open and she said sweetly,

"Allan! Allan McGill! Wherever have you been? Do you realize it's almost midnight?"

"Sorry, honey," he exclaimed brightly as he crossed the threshold and embraced her soundly. "I had a business meeting."

"Not surely, Allan! You'd not be so rude as to keep a client this late!" and her eyes expressed surprise.

"But I did, Linda, and He never once murmured or chided me for it." He laughed in his old familiar way as he continued, "I got a lot of things settled tonight."

"You . . . You . . . did!" Linda exclaimed in profound amazement.

"Was . . . was it . . . good, Allan, and . . . and honest and right?" Linda was always so childlike, sincere and honest that Allan loved her all the more.

"I've never done anything more right and honest in all my days," Allan laughed. "I got things settled with God, honey. You've got a new husband and Paul's got a new father."

"Oh, Allan!" and Linda threw her slender arms around his strong body as she shouted, laughed and cried for joy. "That's the best news I've ever heard," she said.

"Where's Paul?" Allan asked. "I need to do some apologizing to you and to him. I was a proud man and so vain, but God stripped me of it all, and I can hardly wait to hear our son preach."

"He's at Rev. Hill's now," Linda said softly. "He's to preach for us Sunday morning, the Lord willing. Hell be leaving for Bible School within two weeks, you know."

"Wish we could go with him," Allan said brightly. "But it looks like God needs me to be a holy layman and a good, heavy supporter in that little church where Paul found God. Did you say they needed a new furnace, Linda?"

For a long while they sat around the table talking and rejoicing. As they prepared for bed, Allan said, "Better get me up an hour earlier. I was so happy I forgot the car in the parking lot. I'll have to walk the two and a half miles to the company."

A soft, cozy warmth settled deeply upon Linda and her heart was thrilled as she drifted into sweet sleep. Allan had found God and nothing else mattered.