

Copyright 2001 By Lucille King  
All Rights Reserved and Duplication  
Of This Publication Is Forbidden,  
Except For Personal Use

\* \* \* \* \*

Digital Edition 10/22/2001  
By Holiness Data Ministry

\* \* \* \* \*

The Sunday School Beacon  
September 6, 1998



**THE ROOMMATE**  
**By Mrs. Paul E. King**

I looked at the mountain of luggage on the steps of the boys' dorm, more precisely on the step of Hadley Hall, wondering why I'd brought so much but feeling pretty sure I'd have been sorry had I not brought it. Somewhere down the course of the year, I felt sure I'd be making good use of everything before me.

Grabbing the typewriter that was close to my leg and picking up several pieces of luggage, I started up the three flights of stairs, trying to make way for the students coming down. It was a case of "close encounter" but eventually I "landed" on floor three and trudged down the hallway till I spotted the room.

Smiling, I entered the already opened door, exclaiming, "Room 317. I take it you're my roommate. I'm Pete Sauders. We may as well get acquainted now as later. No better time than the present, as goes the saying."

Arms stretched upwards and hammer in hand, pounding nails in the wall for the row of pictures on the bed, was my roommate, all 220 pounds of him. He barely turned. Then he emitted a faintly discernible grunt. I hoped it was friendly.

Setting my luggage and typewriter down on the floor, my eyes scanned the pictures on the bed. "You an artist?" I asked.

Still hammering, the roommate gave me another barely discernible grunt.

"They're beautiful," I remarked, trying for further conversation. "You have real talent, man."

I had hoped to learn his name. He merely grunted again and continued putting in the nails. I left for trip number two after my things on the steps below. Seven trips later the last echo of my footsteps down the hall landed me inside my room where I faced the giant job of unpacking and finding space for everything I'd brought.

"Quite a challenge," I ventured pleasantly to my roommate, "this unpacking and putting things in order." By now, the pieces of art were all hung on the wall next to his bed. The bare wall was transformed into a thing of beauty.

If he heard me, he ignored my comment completely.

"They're beauties," I remarked, more loudly than I normally speak. "Your pictures, I mean."

He turned sideways and gave me only a passing glance, nearly shouting back, "I'm not deaf. I have perfectly good hearing."

"Sorry," I remarked as I put things in drawers and hung my clothes inside the closet which was mine for the year, and when I had the last things stowed away -- the luggage pieces -- and still didn't know my roommate's name, I walked over to where he sat, studying something from a book that looked like light and shadows. In my normal tone of voice I said, "I'm Pete Sauders, like I told you when I first came into the room. What's your name?"

Looking at me like I was a bother, he said loudly, "Grant. Grant Kline. And now, I'd like to be left alone."

"Glad to meet you, Grant," I said. "And sorry that I bothered you. I'd like to be your friend."

"Who said I want a friend? Or need a friend? I enjoy my own company. The only reason I'm here is because the will stated this is where I must come if I want further education."

"It's a good Bible college, Grant. I think you'll like it."

Laying the book on his bed, his eyes declared their message of belligerence and resentment. Then he got to his feet and paced the floor. "A Bible college! Can you believe it! Bible, not art! Why am I here?" He asked the question more to himself than to me, I felt.

"Maybe God had a plan in your coming here," I ventured kindly.

The eyes of the man flashed fire. "God, did you say? No! No! Not God: Grandpa! He never did approve of my studying art. Never! Said art schools didn't help a man's morals; that they helped to make him morally degenerate by their explicit depiction of the body and such things. But I love art."

"God gave you a talent for painting, Grant; that's obvious. You did all those on the wall without much, if any, special training, I would imagine, from what you just told me. Maybe your grandfather's insight and spiritual perception is another of God's special gifts to you, even though you don't see it as such now. I perceive that that good man was a Christian, right?"

Still enraged, Grant exclaimed, "But that doesn't mean that he can make me a Christian! I have ambitions to be an artist. A real artist! I want to make my living that way."

"Looks to me like you're on your way, Grant, going just as you are."

"But you don't understand, Pete. You're just like Grandpa was. I want big bucks, and to get them I've got to have training. Real training. And here I am at a Bible school. A Bible school! Can you believe it!"

"Yes, I can, Grant. It looks to me like God has a hand in your being here."

"It's not God, I tell you; it's because of Grandpa's crazy will. I came here out of spite and because I was determined to get at least a bite out of that money left to me for my education. Not to art school, mind you, but here: a Bible school! I haven't the foggiest idea what courses to take. How could he do this to me?"

"I'll be praying for you, Grant. I'm sure he loved you very much."

He looked at me with what seemed to be contempt, saying, "It looks like I'm saddled with another religious fanatic. And for a whole year at that! Now let me get back to my book and no more interruptions, please."

"As you wish, Grant. Nice talking to you."

Again he settled into his moody, brooding silence, not even grunting an answer. I left the room and strolled across the tree-shaded campus, making friends with fellow students who were there. It was great to find those of the same spirit and mind as mine. Christians were on the same wave length without a doubt, I mused silently. True Christians, that is. My heart ached for my roommate, knowing that he was going to feel out of place at our school. I longed desperately for him to become converted and be one of us -- in spirit, word, thought and deed. He seemed so hard and bitter; so set against things pertaining to God.

Conversation was nil when I got back to the room. No amount of cajoling or small talk could elicit a single word from Grant. His lips remained

sealed. He pulled book after book off the book rack that he had brought with him and had placed next to the night stand which was beside his bed. Then he studied and studied whatever it was he was reading or looking at on the pages of the books pertaining to art.

I left to get a bite to eat, asking Grant to go with me, even volunteering to bring him a sandwich, or something. He turned away from his intense studying long enough to furrow his great, dark, shaggy eyebrows and frown darkly at me, but that was all: not a single word. No yes or no. No "Thank you for asking me." Nothing. His frown and the unpleasant look on his face spoke volumes, however. I knew he was highly agitated and greatly displeased that I was his roommate. He was trying to freeze me out by his stoic attitude and unverbal manner of communication.

I was thankful for prayer; thankful that years ago I had made it a daily practice to pray. Both early morning and night. That mighty and powerful "weapon" had entered homes where my words of testimony for Christ would not have been welcome. It had traveled to lands I could not go to physically. It had opened doors that only God could open. It had led me down plain paths of righteousness and true holiness. It had anchored me spiritually to the one and only Rock, Jesus Christ my Lord and Savior and my Sanctifier.

I would pray for my poor unhappy, lost roommate, I thought silently. It would be a battle, I was sure, for Grant seemed to have a fixed heart for rebellion and spite and bitterness, what a trio of wickedness, I mused in silence as I entered the cafeteria.

The days fell into a routine-pattern, like all school days do. I got up early each morning, read my Bible and prayed inside my closet, preparing my heart for whatever may come for that day and feeding and nourishing my inner man on the wonderful truths of God's Word and on the consciousness of His precious presence through prayer. Grant's furrowed brows and frowning face revealed his great annoyance and deep displeasure over what I was doing. He never uttered a word: he didn't need to; his facial expression was a dead giveaway of the bitter resentment that was lodged inside his heart.

We had no verbal communication: none whatever. I got used to the silence and the cold shoulder treatment. I continued praying for him, trying repeatedly to let him know that I was his friend but to no avail. Grant's entire

being was like a plugged up fountain or a hedged in garden with unyielding, impenetrable walls of his own making; walls that could be felt but not seen. I refused to succumb or give in to the walls, however, and often, in a kind, Christian way, I continued to be friendly and tried to speak to him even though I was ignored.

We had two classes together. He answered the questions that were asked of him but nothing more. He seemed always to be in a world of his own. He had a brilliant mind, I learned. Frequently I found myself wondering about his deceased grandfather, who wanted his heir to study things about God; things that had eternal values and would last forever. From the tenor of Grant's words, the man was a real Christian. He had even put me in the same "class" as his grandparent -- a "religious fanatic." Not exactly a compliment, to be sure, as stated, but indirectly it was a compliment and I felt honored to be regarded thusly with the man who must have had his sight on things that were spiritual, high and nobler than earth's vanishing pleasures.

Before leaving for home at Christmas time, I left a card on my roommate's dresser, letting him know that I was his friend and that I would be praying for him. I wished him a blessed Christmas and a wonderful New Year. Then I left.

I knew the minute I stepped inside the door of Room 317 upon my return back to school, that something was different. And wrong. Was it the silence? No. I had become accustomed to that in Room 317. It was a way of life with Grant. At least, around all of us in the school, it was. Still, I frequently thanked God for my strange roommate, whose tongue had never spoken a derogatory sentence about anyone on campus. This was something for which to be thankful, I frequently reminded myself when I wished for only fragments of conversation with him.

My eyes went to the wall then. It was bare. Nothing but nail holes were there. I got the silent message immediately. Grant was gone. For good. A lump in my throat blocked passage as I tried to swallow. I stood in dumb silence for a long while, staring at the wall.

Walking like a robot and still in shock, I went to the dresser to put things in the drawers when I saw the envelope. I picked it up and opened it.

"Pete," it stated, "I hate to do you this way, but I must. I cannot tolerate another day of going to school here. I'm gone and out. For good. I plan to work my way through the school of my choosing.

"Thanks for being a super roommate and a supergreat guy. I treated you most unkindly and hatefully. For this I am sorry. Accept my apology, please. You proved to me the reality of full salvation -- like my grandparents had, and lived for more than 50 years. If ever I change, I want what you have and what my grandfather and grandmother had.

Keep praying for me. Someday I'll do a painting just for you. Stay like you are -- always.  
Grant

Overwhelmed with something I couldn't explain or describe, I fell on my knees beside the bed and wept and prayed for Grant. Suddenly I realized that he wasn't totally calloused and hardened and that God could, in His own way, move upon my roommate's heart and bring him to the foot of the cross for pardon and forgiveness just as He had brought me years ago.

I arose and put the letter inside the dresser drawer, then resumed the job of unpacking and settling in for the rest of the school year, already missing the broad shoulders and the bent-over head studying from a book at the desk across the room from my bed.