

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
February 7, 1999



NO ONE TO SEE
By Mrs. Paul E. King

Tammy leaned her back deep into the seat of the plane after making sure her seat belt was buckled properly. She felt excited, and thrilled at the thought of spending a whole month with Shannon on the west coast.

Shannon and she were almost inseparable before Uncle Len and Aunt Andrew made the move to the coast, where his company had transferred her

uncle. Shannon was her favorite cousin and her best friend. They were more like sisters than cousins: both sets of parents had declared this many times.

Tammy had cried for days when Shannon broke the news to her of her father's forthcoming move. Both Shannon and she had felt that it was one of the worst possible things that could come into their lives -- ever. But it had come, the move was made and, surprise of surprises, she had survived. Sure, she missed Shannon; dreadfully so. But she had her church and church friends and everything around her remained the same as always.

Poor Shannon! Tammy thought, as the plane's engines roared to life and prepared to head down the runway for the takeoff. Shannon had to make all new friends. Everyone on the coast was a stranger to her: she knew no one except her immediate family. That would be hard, Tammy mused, feeling sorry for her cousin.

A stewardess came down the aisle, checking to make sure all seat belts were fastened and that overhead storage compartments were shut securely; then the plane began moving. Soon now, Tammy knew, they would be airborne. Excitement raced through her. One whole month! she thought. Thirty-one days to do what she wanted to do. Oh, what fun she would have.

She watched as the good earth dropped beneath her and the plane moved swiftly toward the clouds. Houses, roads, cars and fields took on the appearance of miniature toys as the plane nosed upwards, higher and higher, above the clouds until, as she gazed through the window, she saw nothing but a sea of puffy, white marshmallow-looking fluff around her and beneath her.

It was beautiful, she mused silently as she scanned the heavens, looking for an opening in the sea of white that would give her a glimpse of the earth beneath. But all she saw were the puffy, fluffy marshmallow looking clouds; mountains of them and plateaus of them. Everywhere she looked - clouds, clouds and more clouds.

In a very little while, Tammy became bored with watching the clouds. Opening her purse, she took out the book she had slipped into one of the compartments and began to read. Books were some of her best and most companionable "friends." She loved to read and to study and in no time at all

she was absorbed in the book and forgot that she was on a plane that was taking her farther and farther away from her parents and her home.

The book consumed her thoughts and her time. A good book was, indeed, a most delightful "companion" on a long trip, the dark-haired girl mused some time later as drowsiness enveloped her and she shut the book and closed her eyes and slept.

Lights of the San Francisco airport glimmered and twinkled and blinked at her as Tammy prepared to deplane. She was here! she mused in silent excitement. In a way, it seemed unreal to the girl that she was finally going to be on her own for a full month. Never before had she been away from her parents: always, if there was any going away for a vacation, or anywhere, it was done as a family. Her parents were definitely and positively family-oriented, no getting away from it.

"Before too long," her father often said, "you children will be grown and will be out on your own. We want to make memories as a family that will keep us close in heart and mind and that will make you want to come home as often as possible, once you are gone."

It was a consoling thought, Tammy had to admit. A nicely warm and cozy thought, really, and she felt good about it all. But for once, she was going to "let her hair down" (whatever that meant, but what Tasha Riggins, a neighbor girl, often told her she needed to do now that she was almost seventeen) and she was going to act, well, more independent and do what she wanted to do. Rules could become a bit constricting, or restricting. Maybe it was both. Yes, that was it; it was both, she thought silently as she walked down the aisle of the plane toward the door.

Tammy saw her cousin before she was fully off the ramp that led into the airport and the moment she was inside the mammoth terminal she and Shannon were in each other's arms, crying tears of happiness and joy. She realized again just how much she had missed Shannon.

Hugs and kisses from Aunt and Uncle, then luggage pieces all accounted for, they were soon on their way to Shannon's folks' house. Chatting like noisy magpies and laughing with happiness at being together again, the two in the back seat of the car tried to get caught up with what happened in their lives since being separated.

Tammy was sure she had never been happier than she was at that very moment. It was almost like she was having a wonderful dream, she felt, and when she saw how close to the ocean her relatives lived she was ecstatic. She knew her vacation would be the best ever that any seventeen-year-old could possibly have.

Less than a week after she arrived, Tammy asked, "Don't you go to the beach, Shannon? It's so close to your house. We could walk there. . . ." Her sentence trailed suggestively.

"It's always so crowded, Tammy. And there's absolutely no privacy for . . . for swimming."

"So . . .?"

Shannon turned and faced her cousin, wondering if she had heard her correctly and "read" the connotation of her verbalized question rightly. Then she said, "It's filled with scantily-clad mixed bathers, Tammy. Everywhere you look, you see the same thing. It's disgusting. I never go there."

"You don't?" Tammy was exasperated. "And it's so close, too. All that beautiful water and these gloriously sunny days and you don't go! I can't believe it, Shannon. Why?"

Shannon studied her cousin for a long time. Then she said in what was a shocked tone of voice, "I take it you'd go; that you want to go."

"Sure. Why not? I'm on vacation, right? I'm going to enjoy my time here. I even bought a bathing suit. 'Course, Mother doesn't know."

Sitting down on one of the wicker chairs on the porch, Shannon was silent for a long time. Then, in a sad voice, she said, "You've changed, Tammy. I'm sorry for this."

"What do you mean?" Tammy asked as she leaned against the banister of the porch.

Tears were swimming in Shannon's dark brown eyes. "You have always been my favorite cousin and my best friend," she said gently but

brokenly. "You were a spiritual leader in my eyes and always -- always! -- I told my parents that whenever I became a Christian I wanted what you had. You seemed so settled. So stable and satisfied, Tammy. And now, well. . . ."

"Oh, Shannon, let's don't make a mountain out of a molehill over this . . . this beach thing. True, my parents wouldn't approve of my bathing suit, but don't make a mountain out of this, please."

"I won't, Tammy, and I'm not. It's just that . . . well, no real, genuine, born-of-God person would ever unclthe himself or herself in public like they do on the beach. You've changed," she added sadly. "I knew something was wrong when I awakened you for Sunday school and church and you said you weren't going, that you were on vacation and wanted to sleep in. It's the first Sunday I've ever known you to miss. It grieves me, Tammy. It's because of you and what you once were that I am right with God and on my way to Heaven, saved from all my sins and sanctified wholly."

Tammy gasped. She felt the color drain from her face. "You . . . you . . . what?" she asked, barely above a whisper.

"I'm a Christian," Shannon declared softly. "This is what my big surprise was, that I had written to you. And this is especially why I wanted you out for a vacation. I just knew we'd have the best times ever of our lives, sharing together in spiritual things."

"But . . . why didn't you say something to me when I got here?" Tammy asked.

"Shock, Tammy. Shock. I knew something was different when you didn't read your Bible that first night here, before we turned the lights out. I knew it. Long after you fell asleep, I lay in my twin bed and cried. I was up early the next morning for my private devotions. I prayed for you, Tammy. I love you. It crushes me to not see you read that dearest of all Books nor to hear you pray like you used to do. Did you know you haven't read the Bible one time, nor prayed, since coming here?"

Tammy's head dropped. She was guilty and she knew it. She needed no earthly judge to pronounce sentence on her and proclaim her guilty. Ah no! The Judge of all the earth had used her beloved cousin to prick her conscience and convict her young and still tender heart. Tears began to fall.

"I love you, Tammy, and like I said, I'm praying for you," Shannon stated softly, adding, "I miss the cousin I knew before we moved here."

Lifting tear-wet eyes, Tammy said, "Thanks much for praying for me, Shannon. I need it. I'm guilty on every count. I may as well confess, for I know I'll have to do this to the Lord before I can be saved: but I came out here having purposed in my heart that I was going to have a good time and live differently than I lived at home. I figured since no one here but you and your family knew me, that I'd go to the beach and swim if I had the opportunity to do so, and that I'd only go to church or read the Bible and pray if I wanted to. It was pure wickedness on my part, I know."

"Especially when we both know that God's all-seeing eye sees everything we do wherever we may be," Shannon stated thoughtfully. "We're never without His observation nor His knowledge of our purposes, Tammy."

"I know, Shannon. Where can we go to pray? I'm sorry that I disappointed you. More sorry, even, that I failed God. I want to come back."

In a rush, Shannon was beside her cousin, sobbing. "We can go to the bedroom, Tammy. Mother's gone to the grocery store and of course Dad's at work. Please, don't let my parents know that you were out of victory," Shannon pleaded. "I believe they're on the very brink of getting saved. They planned to go to church with us. When you didn't go on Sunday, Mother thought it was because of the long plane ride, that you were still tired from that. So she said they'd both stay home with you so you wouldn't be alone when you got up."

"Oh, Shannon, how wicked of me! I kept them away from church! Please, let's go and pray. I want God's peace back in my heart."

Crossing the porch, they hurried inside.