

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
May 9, 1999



APARTMENT FOR RENT
By Mrs. Paul E. King

The road narrowed and turned abruptly, as Kyle Eastman observed, steering the metallic blue colored sports car along the highway. He had all but forgotten about the nasty turn until he was almost to it. He shuddered, recalling a night and a time when, but for the prayers of his grandmother, he might have been a statistic like his three friends were. He -- Kyle -- alone had lived and survived that dreadful accident. It was a terrifying experience.

He felt cold, remembering that wild and wicked night. Against his grandparent's order not to go, he had gone. Yes, in open defiance and rebellion, he had pushed past her small body, where she stood as a sentinel on duty in the doorway with tears in her eyes and pleading with him to obey, he had gone outside and joined his three friends. What a night it had turned out to be. Yes, what a night!

Monty was the driver that night. He had picked up Brent and J. C. before stopping for him -- Kyle. In a light mood and already "soaked" with alcoholic drinks, Monty was reckless. They drove to the pavilion where the party and the dance was, carousing until the wee hours of the morning. It was on the road home that it happened. Monty was more reckless and careless than ever. It was as though he felt he were invincible; like nothing could happen to him; like he was in control of everything.

"Watch me take the turn, fellows," he had shouted, where the road narrowed before turning abruptly. "Watch me!" he shouted a second time as he accelerated heavily and headed into the sharp turn.

Those were the last words Kyle had heard from Monty. When he regained consciousness inside the hospital and was told that it was a miracle that he was alive and not in a morgue like his three friends, Kyle knew the why of his reprieve with death: His grandmother's fervent prayers were the only thing that had kept him from being hurled out into eternity and into the lake of fire to burn forever, that fateful night.

Kyle's flesh got cold with remembering. He had made some vows that night; vows which he soon forgot and never did carry out or fulfill. He had treated his grandmother better after the accident; for a while, at least. But soon he was back in his old rut of belittling her and saying unkind, nasty and hateful things to her. This in spite of the fact that she had made a home for him when his parents and sister were killed in an accident not far from their home by a drunken driver.

He recalled how he resented not having a man in the house and how he rebelled inwardly -- and sometimes outwardly and openly -- against his grandmother's rules and restrictions for him.

"Kyle," she had told him, "your grandfather and I always had rules and restrictions for our children. They are all founded upon the principles and guidelines from the Bible. I'm sure your father told you about this, and of how he was reared and brought up. If your grandfather were living, he would do what I am doing. You must obey my orders. I am not unreasonable in my demands, dear boy."

And she wasn't: this was true. All his life, he had recognized her kindness and realized that everything she was asking him to do or to not do was only for his good. Still he resented it all and rebelled.

"I wish I would have died with my parents and my sister," he shouted to his grandmother one time when he was told to do something that he resented doing.

With tears in her gentle eyes and a loving hand on his shoulder, she had asked softly, "Would you have been ready for death, Kyle? Where would your soul be if you had been in the car with them that night and been killed instantly, like they were?"

He remembered having shaken her hand off his shoulder; remembered, too, his brutal and bitter retort: "Anything would be better than being here under your care!"

Oh, why had he said such a wicked and cruel thing? he wondered now, as he drove on, wanting more than anything to see the dear, sweet, familiar face.

Tears, sudden and unbidden, blinded his vision momentarily. His ruthlessness shamed him.

He recalled the years when his greatest delight and joy was going to his grandfather's and grandmother's house to stay for a weekend or a holiday. Nothing could match the joy of those times; nothing compared to the excited anticipation of the upcoming weekend or special holiday at their house and in their home. How long ago that was!

Carefully and slowly, he took the sharp curve, wishing desperately that he could recall the unkind and cutting words of the past. He knew, however,

that words spoken could never again be recalled or unspoken. No, they would haunt him for so long as he lived.

His pulse quickened as he neared the home place half an hour later. Pulling up in front of the gate, he stopped the car and got out, walking with quick and hurried steps across the porch to the door. "May I help you?"

The voice startled him.

"What do you want?"

Kyle, taken off guard, said simply, "Wh . . . where's Grandma?"

It was the woman's turn now to stand in amazement. "Grandma?" she asked, before saying, "Grandma whom? I don't know of any grandmother living here. I mean, my husband and I bought this place from a Mr. Firestone six years ago. There was no grandparent living with him when we bought the house."

Kyle felt a cold fear grip him. "Didn't anyone ever mention the name of Amanda Eastman when you were in the process of buying this house?" he asked quickly. "She was my grandmother. I've been gone for years."

The woman gave him a long, searching look before saying, "I never heard of her. I'm sorry, Sir. Sorry, too, that you failed to keep in touch with her. Why, she could be dead for all you know."

In shock, Kyle thanked the woman then walked back to the car and drove slowly away, marveling that he hadn't taken notice of the many changes to the house and its surroundings until now, as he was departing.

He felt a great heaviness inside his chest: it was like a great stone was pressing in upon him. What happened to Grandma? Suppose she was dead! Where could he go to find out where she was? The church! Ah, that was it. Surely, someone from Grandma's church would know: they could tell him where she had moved to, or gone.

He accelerated more heavily now as he retraced the way he had come, again taking the sharp turn with caution and care.

No one was at the church when he got there. Heretofore, Brother Norris was always at the study in the church at this hour. Now, the parking lot was empty of cars. Quickly, he drove to where the parsonage had been. A stranger met him at the door as he knocked; a young woman carrying a baby in her arm with a toddler tugging at her skirt.

"Sorry to bother you," Kyle apologized as the smiling woman greeted him from inside the door. "I am looking for Amanda Eastman. She was a member of the church for many years. This is still the parsonage, I would imagine?"

His sentence was more of a question than a statement.

Still smiling and stooping down to gather the toddler up in her free arm, the woman replied, "Yes, this is the parsonage. But I can't recall of ever having heard of an Amanda Eastman. My husband may be able to help you, though. Let me call him; he's repairing something in the garage for our four-year-old son."

"I'll go and find him," Kyle answered quickly. "Thank you, for your help."

Within minutes, he learned that Amanda Eastman had moved to a rather small town sixty miles distant and that she had her membership transferred to the church there.

"She must have been a great and remarkable woman, from all the reports I've heard," the young pastor remarked. "She was the kind of person every pastor thanks God for, the former pastor told me. A widow for many years, I understand, who was left with a grandson to raise, so I heard."

"Do you know her address?" Kyle asked, wanting desperately to get away lest his identity be questioned and be made known.

"I'm sure someone in the town will be able to help you to locate her," came the quick reply. "It's not a very large town."

"Thank you, Sir," Kyle answered. "I'm sure I'll be able to find her. I appreciate all your help and your kindness."

Prestonville. A little town, indeed. Whatever had made his grandparent sell out and move into a place such as that? he wondered.

She was getting old when he had left so suddenly and, that, without so much as letting her know where he was going or what he would be doing. He reasoned that she would know he had left when she saw his empty dresser drawers and clothes closet.

The job he had gotten in the city wasn't what he had expected so, within a half year, he had enlisted in the Navy. He had traveled to many ports abroad, in many different countries, seldom thinking about his grandmother. His life was full of excitement and promotions. He was sure nothing could be greater, finer or better -- until he nearly lost his life in a freak accident on the ship at sea. That night he heard his grandmother's prayers as clearly as though she had been kneeling on the ship beside him. He realized immediately that he could never ever get away from those prayers. They would follow him for so long as he lived and, were he so unfortunate as to make his bed in hell, they would be there to taunt and torture him forever for not heeding them and turning from sin into the arms of God.

The drive to Prestonville was made in good time and, Kyle, feeling sure that the grocer in the largest supermarket would know where his grandmother lived, hurried into the neat store, asking one of the clerks about Amanda Eastman.

"I hear she's not been well," the middle-aged woman replied. "She lives in the same building where Broadmann's Appliances are sold. She's the first apartment on 3rd Street. The appliance store runs along Main Street. She hasn't been here for weeks though."

"Thanks much," Kyle replied, as he hurried away. He didn't want anyone asking him if he was her wayward grandson.

"Broadmann's Appliances," he said aloud as he saw the neat sign that hung from the front of the building where 3rd Street crossed Main. Excitement mounted inside him. Would she know him? he wondered as he turned the corner on 3rd, parked the car and got out.

Walking briskly, he turned toward the apartment. And then he saw the sign on the door: APARTMENT for RENT. It was a big sign.

He stood deathly still, shocked beyond any describing. He felt like he was going to choke, so dry had his spittle become. Rushing into the appliance store he blurted, "Where does Amanda Eastman live? I was told that her apartment was the one behind your store, but that's for rent. Do you know her?"

"Do we know her! Rather, did we know her? Yes. yes. A better woman never lived. She's with the angels now. Her influence lives on, however. Too bad her grandson wasn't here to see her die "

"Die? When? What happened?"

"She wasn't exactly young sir: ninety-four, almost ninety-five's a right good age, I'd say. Took the flu and never got over it. She had very little of this world's goods, but a more joyous and contented soul you'd never find. Now she's walking on streets that are paved with gold and looking on the face of the Christ she loved."

"Wh . . . when . . . did she pass away?"

"Three, four weeks ago. I miss her, I tell you. Never got another renter like her. She was laid to rest in the little cemetery about three miles out of town, going west. Only wish her grandson could have been here with her before she died. She talked about him all the time and prayed for him like you wouldn't believe."

Feeling like he was going to suffocate, Kyle thanked the man and left hurriedly. Before pulling away from the curb, he gazed long at the big old building which looked tired and was in need of repairs. The sign haunted him. Never again would he see her sweet face nor hear her kind and loving voice. Never. He had waited too long.

The cemetery! he thought. Yes, he would find where she was resting and, maybe, over her almost still-fresh grave, he could find her God. He would tell her how sorry he was for his bitter words and his harsh, unkind and thankless attitude. He would ask her to forgive him and he would ask for God's forgiveness, too.

Feeling broken and contrite and limp as a wet rag, he headed for the cemetery. He could try, yes, he could try; and if Grandma's God was as loving and forgiving as she said He was, Kyle knew he'd find the peace and soul rest for which his heart was yearning.

With tears flowing down his cheeks, he saw the cemetery and drove in.