

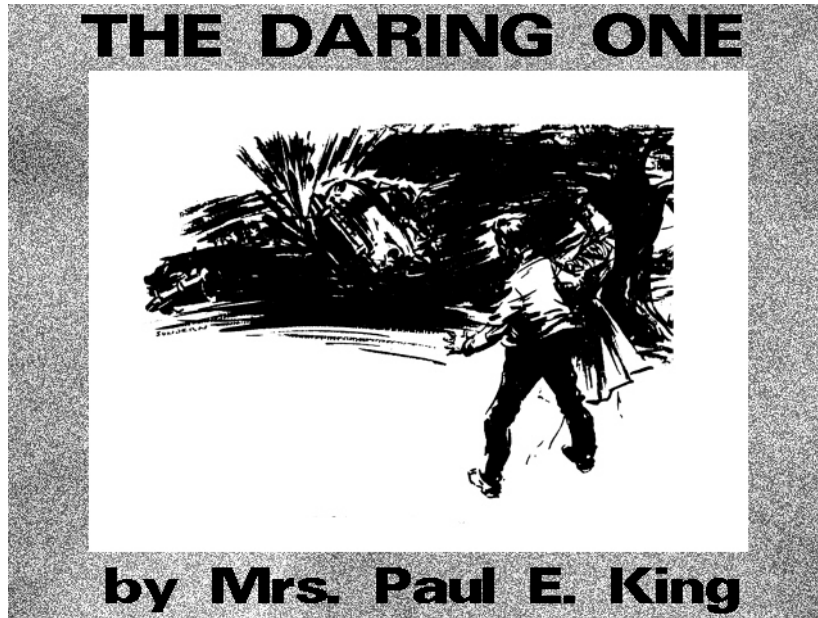
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THE DARING ONE
By Mrs. Paul E. King

Darrin sat with his mouth agape, staring at the speedometer needle that rested on eighty-five. "Hey, you're way past the speed limit, Brett," he said, trying to steady his voice as the sports car raced down the highway.

Glancing casually and quickly over at Darrin, Brett said matter-of-factly, "So what? You scared? I can do better than that," he added, as he jammed

his foot down on the accelerator and the yellow car jerked forward settling the needle on ninety miles an hour.

Darrin turned pale with fright. Panic churned inside him. "Please, Brett," he said, "let me out. You're challenging death."

"Chicken!" Ray and Don chorused from the back seat:

"Maybe so," Darrin answered softly, "but I'll feel a lot safer when I'm out of here. Don't you realize what you're doing, Brett? This is downright dangerous. And if you're caught speeding -- at ninety miles an hour, especially -- you're in for a stiff fine. And rightly so. Now, please let me out. I'll walk home."

"You're chicken," Ray accused from the back seat.

"I just believe in obeying the rules and regulations of the road, fellows. It's a lot safer this way. Too, Christians, of all people, should obey the laws," Darrin stated.

"What's wrong with having some fun?" Brett asked, slowing down and pulling off the road. "Your request is granted," he added. "The fellows and I'll see just what this smart little job of a car can do. Enjoy your walk back to town."

"Thanks much," Darrin said, breathing a sign of relief as he got out. "Be careful. I'll be praying for you."

With a shout of, "Chicken!" from inside the car, Brett jammed his foot on the accelerator and the little car leaped forward and was soon out of sight.

Thanking God that he was no longer inside, Darrin crossed over to the opposite side of the road and began walking. It would take him some time to get home, he knew, for Brett had driven at least seven or eight miles out into the country. Little matter; he was out of the car and much preferred to walk than to be riding in a car with one who was daring and took chances and seemed to have no respect whatever for the laws of the land.

It was a sunny and cheerfully-bright Saturday morning. Darrin was grateful that it wasn't humid; the walk was pleasant. He enjoyed watching the

farmers as they baled their first cutting of sweet-smelling alfalfa hay and the lilting, melodic song of the meadowlark filled with praise to God. What a great and mighty God he served! He gave to the lily its spotless, satiny-white garment and He fed and provided for the beasts of the land and the fowls of the heavens, noting, even, when a sparrow fell to the ground.

The remembrance of God's care for a tiny sparrow brought tears to Darrin's eyes.

What a great and wonderful thing walking was! he mused, silently, as he stopped and plucked a four-leaf clover he spied growing along the shoulder of the road. One never saw such lovely blessings while riding in a car, he realized, deciding that, Lord willing, he was going to do more walking when his chores were finished at home and when he was through working at his part-time job. It gave one more time to meditate and pray and think on the good things of God.

A car slowed down as it came toward him and a soft, feminine voice called out, "Darrin! What are you doing way out here? Did your car finally expire?" Connie pulled alongside the road and stopped the car, smiling as she asked the question.

Darrin stepped over to the car. Handing her the four-leaf clover, he said, "A special remembrance to a special and wonderful Christian lady. Now, may I ask what you are doing out here this mid-Saturday morning?"

"I ran into the hospital to see and pray with dear old Mrs. Withers. She's such a sweet saint of God, and with her children all living so far away and unable to see her as often as they'd like to, I try to fill in the empty spaces as much as I can. I'll never be able to take their place, but it brightens her day."

"Oh, Connie, you're a little saint yourself. God will bless and reward you for all the deeds of kindness and mercy you do. Now, to answer your questions: no, my Old Sal is still running, in spite of her ages-old appearance and outward looks. Brett Howard got a new sports car. He asked me to go with him to celebrate this shiny-bright yellow acquisition. Ray and Don were along also. He was 'demonstrating' its power to the point where I asked to please be let out of the car. This is why I'm walking."

"You mean he was speeding, Darrin, right?"

"It was more like he was challenging death, Connie. It was frightening. I only wish he and Ray and Don would be more spiritual. As the young people's leader in our church, I carry a heavy burden for those three. It seems they have little or no desire for the deep things of God. I asked them, privately, if they were right with God and knew they were saved and each one professed to being all right. I'm concerned though. Greatly so."

"Darrin, you and I both know that one who is truly born again has a great and deep desire and hunger for the things of God. It's a Spirit-produced hunger; it can only be satisfied by consistently reading the Bible and praying, then walking in the light and being filled with the Holy Spirit."

"Then," Darrin said, "after one has been thoroughly and wholly sanctified, this wonderful deeper life has just begun. Oh, how I desire this for each of the young people in our church."

"I've been praying for this to happen, Darrin. So have some of the others. Get in the car; I'll take you home. Or, better still, why not go with me to call on that new Meredith family. They have three teenagers. I've been trying to get them to come to church. Maybe if those young people met you it would help them to decide to come. They'll make real soldiers for Jesus, I feel."

"I'd be delighted to meet them," Darrin said, as he got into the car and Connie pulled out onto the highway. "My folks won't worry, since they know Brett planned for us to be gone about three hours," he added.

Keeping her eyes on the road and driving carefully, Connie said, "I'm so glad you're not in Brett's car, Darrin. It's dangerous for one to go with him. My cousin went with him one time: he said he'll never go with him again. And he hasn't. He said Brett's a dangerously daring driver who takes one chance after another. I've never told this to another soul until now -- to you. I'm glad you had the courage to ask to get out."

"I felt I had to, Connie. I only pray he won't get killed."

"And kill those with him," Connie added seriously and thoughtfully.

They drove another two miles; then Connie said, "We get out here, Darrin. I'll park this car beneath this oak tree so we're safely off the road. We'll have to walk about a quarter of a mile to get to the Merediths' house. The last rain storm we had took the bridge out. It will be replaced, of course; but it's not there now. There's a little foot bridge across the stream, put there by the Merediths until the main bridge is built by the county."

"That's great, Connie. This has been a truly wonderful morning for me as I walked. The Lord's presence has been so close and real. I know I'll enjoy this walk too. This is such a beautiful world."

"And to think that the Lord created it all out of nothing -- for us to enjoy!" Connie stated reverently.

Connie locked the car, and just as they turned to start up the road to the Merediths', they became aware of the roar of cars in the distance. Turning, they saw two cars racing side by side, each trying to outdistance the other. One of the cars was Brett's.

"Connie," Darrin cried, "it's Brett and Craig. They'll kill someone, sure enough. If a car comes toward them up the next hill there'll be a three-car crash. Oh, what can we do to stop them!"

Suddenly, Craig's red sports car hit a chuckhole that threw him into Brett's yellow car. There was a rending crash of metal on metal, then a long, drawn-out scream from both cars. The two cars slammed together, seemed suspended for an instant, then Brett's car toppled over and burst into flames.

Racing to where the cars were, Darrin and Connie saw that Brett was trapped; his body was pinned beneath the steering wheel where gasoline flames licked at the floor. Ray and Don, looking white like chalk, were working feverishly to free themselves. Craig was screaming for help, declaring that the steering wheel was crushing the life out of him. The others with him were either dead or unconscious; not a sound came from them.

Praying fervently and telling Connie to drive to the nearest house and phone for ambulances and help, Darrin raced over to Brett. Opening the door was a chore. But he did it, with God's help. Then, getting a grip on Brett's arms, he gently and carefully pulled him out of the car. Black, oily smoke stifled his lungs. Placing Brett on the grass and suffocating the smoldering

flames that licked at his trouser legs with a piece of rug, Darrin then opened the back door so Ray and Don could crawl out.

"Help! Help! Please!" Craig pleaded pitifully. Darrin rushed over to help just as an ambulance came into view. Immediately the crew went to work, freeing Craig and the two fellows in his car, who were unconscious from the impact of the crash but were not seriously injured.

A second ambulance took Brett, who was the most seriously injured of all. Ray and Don had fractures and were badly bruised and cut. Blood from the cut and wounds made them look frightfully injured, however. Darrin prayed as the ambulances took off for the hospital, their sirens screaming and lights flashing.

Connie trembled with fright. "It's almost unbelievable," she said, shuddering. "What a dangerous thing to do!" Again she shuddered. "Suppose we had been going down this two-lane highway a few minutes later than we did, Darrin! We could have been a statistic by now, traveling in one of those ambulances as Corpses." She buried her face in her hands and wept, saying, "The Lord preserved us! He spared our lives! He helped me to think about visiting the Merediths. Yes, God preserved our lives."

"By minutes!" Darrin added. "Oh, what a mighty and wonderful God we serve! I will praise Him forever and ever!" Squaring his shoulders, he said, "I'm sure Brett will be rethinking some of the things he said and did since this accident, Connie."

"Like what? Did he call you a coward? Chicken, maybe?"

"I feel there'll be some changes made, Connie. God knows how to bring us down. But say, hadn't we better be on our way to the Merediths? I'm anxious to meet them."

Drying her tears, Connie said, "Let's go. We have a mission to fulfill. I feel it's going to be a profitable one -- for the Lord."

Falling in step with each other, they started up the road.