

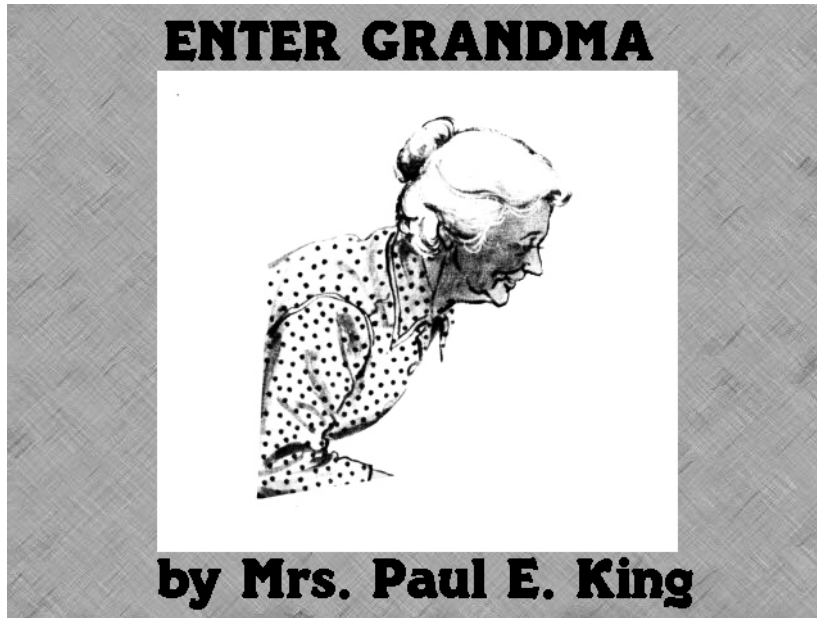
Copyright 2001 By Lucille King
All Rights Reserved and Duplication
Of This Publication Is Forbidden,
Except For Personal Use

* * * * *

Digital Edition 10/22/2001
By Holiness Data Ministry

* * * * *

The Sunday School Beacon
May 23, 1999



ENTER GRANDMA
By Mrs. Paul E. King

Torrie Blackman stormed down the stair steps, her countenance as dark and stormy looking as her mood. "Where's my magazine?" she demanded angrily of her mother.

"I don't know what you're talking about," Sarah Blackman replied as she ran cold water over the potatoes she was peeling. "Which magazine was it, Torrie? Grandma may be looking at it. Or is she still napping?"

Torrie gave a harsh laugh, then she exclaimed, "I almost hate Grandma. Nothing's the same since she's here. Nothing. She's forever calling me Sarah and she declares that she never heard of the name Torrie: not in all of her life. Can you believe it!"

"Yes, I can: in Grandma's day more Biblical names were common," Sarah Blackman answered as she spun around and faced her irate daughter, dropping both the half-peeled potato and knife in the kitchen sink. Taking Torrie by her shoulders and tilting her face upward until eye contact was made, Mrs. Blackman said kindly but authoritatively, "Don't ever talk about your grandmother like that again! Never: Do you understand, Torrie Jeannine? This is an order!"

Torrie dropped her gaze. Again Sarah Blackman tilted the girl's chin and face until eye contact was made. Then she asked, "Did you bring home another offensive magazine?"

"Offensive only to Grandma," came the terse, defiant reply. "She thinks she can boss me around. Well, I'll show her!"

"Careful, young lady. She is your grandmother. You will respect her and treat her with courtesy and kindness."

"Why couldn't you have put her in one of the nursing homes instead of bringing her here?" Torrie asked harshly.

"Never, Torrie. Never! Not so long as I can do for her. She belongs here, among the people she knows and loves and trusts."

"You don't care that she's ruining my life and is taking all the fun out of it for me, do you? Everything I do, nearly, she says it's sending me to the lake of fire, 'where the fire is not quenched and their worm dieth not.' She's quoted this so often to me until I know it by heart. Then she says, 'O Sarah! Sarah, my dear, dear child, what has happened to you? You were always such a dear, sweet, obedient girl, who wanted only to please the Lord. What has

happened to you? You never did the wicked and evil things you're doing today. Why, Sarah? Why?'

"I tell her I'm not Sarah; that I'm Torrie. Torrie Jeannine Blackman. But does she believe me? No!

"Don't tell me who you are, honey,' she says. 'I know. I birthed you.' Such a funny thing to say. Oh, Mother, can't you see that she'd be better off in a place where they care for people like her? She doesn't even know her own relatives."

"She does, Torrie. She does. She just gets things confused sometimes."

"Confused!" Torrie exclaimed loudly. "It's worse than confusion. Anyone who thinks they can dictate what I should or should not be doing better think again. Grandma's overly religious. She's living in the past. She's. . . ."

"Careful, young lady! Careful! Again I repeat, you will treat her kindly and with respect. Grandma's a wonderful person," Mrs. Blackman stated.

"Then what happened to you that you changed? Grandma cries when she says, 'Oh Sarah, you made your father and me so happy the day you were converted and then, a week later, when you were sanctified wholly and said you felt the Lord wanted to use you to do mission work for Him.'"

"You never told me any of these things, Mother. Why? Grandma, insisting that I am Sarah, said, "You see, Sarah, after having seven sons, I asked the Lord to please send me a daughter. I asked Him for you. And He sent you!"

"I try to get through to her that I am not Sarah, but it doesn't work. I'm learning a lot of things I never knew before, I must admit. But Mother, I'm sick and tired of being treated like a child and of being dictated to. Why, she even puts the hemlines down on my skirts and dresses, telling me I dare not go outside with such 'immodest lengths,' her words. Sometimes I feel like screaming." Torrie slumped down on a kitchen chair.

Mrs. Blackman was shocked into silence by her daughter's words. She looked helplessly around the kitchen, as if seeking refuge in a corner, like a child caught in the act of taking cookies out of the cookie jar.

Torrie, sensing her mother's loss of words and her inadequacy for a proper explanation, said quickly, "Grandma can't understand why we don't go to church nor read the Bible and have family prayers. She said this was a 'deeply ingrained' religious something that was done as habitually and regularly as eating and sleeping and breathing was. And Mother, since she mentioned this, I remembered seeing and listening to a white-haired woman called Mrs. Turnbull in a small white frame church in a woods somewhere. I was very small then and, until Grandma mentioned church and Bible reading, I had forgotten all about that sweet, kind lady. She told us about Jesus and gave us a picture card with a Bible verse on it. I loved getting that little card and listening to her. I always thought her face shone when she was teaching us. Why did we stop going to church?"

Mrs. Blackman's hands trembled; her body shook. Sighing, she took a chair near Torrie and sat down. Suddenly, she felt old, and trapped.

Seeing her mother's despair, Torrie reached over and touched her parent's hand, saying, "You don't need to say anything if you don't want to. I guess I shouldn't have asked: after all, it's none of my business and I don't need to know. It's just that Grandma's revelations have made me curious and have put scads of questions in my head. But don't say anything if it's only going to hurt you and cause old wounds, or whatever, to be opened and to make life painful for you."

Taking a deep breath, Sarah Blackman said, "Things can't remain under cover forever, Torrie. Sooner or later, the past always comes out. All my life, I've known this: God's Word attests to this.

"You were only four years old when we went to Pine Ridge Holiness Church. And you did indeed have a Mrs. Turnbull for your Sunday school teacher. She was a saintly woman; a widow with six children. She knew God.

"Your father's job kept us pretty well on the move those days, for he was being trained to take Mr. Archer's position upon the elderly man's retirement and resignation. This came when you were between nine and ten years of age and, of course, we were, by then, settled down here, at

Company headquarters, many, many miles from the little Holiness church and from your grandparents."

Torrie sat like one mesmerized. Memories of a kindly-faced grandfather and gentle-hearted, loving grandmother flashed back to her now, like beautiful pictures from a favorite but faded book. She remembered Grandma's fast-falling tears and her tender words of departure, as her father helped her into the big, new car before they pulled away from Pine Ridge, seldom to return except for an emergency and, finally, her grandfather's funeral.

Tears filled Torrie's eyes as she recalled her grandfather's tight squeeze that day, so long ago, and his promise, "I'll be praying every day of my life for you, little Tor. Yes indeed, every single day of my life."

He had kissed her then, and she had promised to pray for him and Grandma too, adding affectionately, "When I am big, and can write, I'll write to you, Grandpa. I will. And to you, too, Grandma."

And then they were gone. Her childish promises, so full of pure intent and well-meaning plans, had never become reality and went unfulfilled. Now it paraded back to her, across the years of her mind, like soldiers come to accuse and to convict her. "Are you listening, Torrie?"

Her mother's question sliced through her haunting thoughts. "I was thinking, Mother. Go on, please."

"Your father, wanting you to have a broader and greater social life, thought it was advantageous for us to go to one of the larger and more fashionable churches here. So we started attending the Broadway Church in the heart of the city, joining it shortly after, and, of course, we are still attenders there."

"You mean when and if Father isn't too busy with everything else," Torrie added.

"Well, he is a busy man, Torrie. And really, I don't mind missing the minister's essays. They're so . . . dry, and different from what we heard back in Pine Ridge. Brother Hogue's sermons always stirred and helped me."

"We could always change, Mother."

"We should have done it years ago, while you were in your impressionable years. But your father wanted you to have friends from a . . . well. . . ."

"Don't say it, Mother; I know what you mean. But honestly, these so-called friends from the so-called upper class are sham. I've never felt like I could get close to any of them. They're the ones who introduced me to the things Gram says will help to put me into the lake of fire, 'where the fire is not quenched and their worm dieth not.'"

"Forgive me, Torrie," Sarah Blackman cried. "I should have taken my stand when your father said he wanted you to have your freedom, like the girls in this modern age were having. In my heart, I knew that the only true freedom anyone had, or has, is the soul that is born again, from above, and has his freedom in Christ. All other so-called freedom is bondage. Anyone and everyone who is bound and chained by sin and sinful habits doesn't know the meaning of the word freedom. He -- or she -- is not free; they're in bondage."

"I once was free in Christ, Torrie. Everything your grandmother said is true. My life had purpose and meaning to it. Christ was my everything: He was at the center of my life. I was so joyful and happy and my soul had an indescribable peace and inner rest."

"What happened, Mother? Why did you change? I mean, why didn't you hold on to it? Grandma said that for seventy-nine years she has been walking with the Lord. Maybe I wouldn't be like I am if Father and you had remained faithful and true to the Lord, the way Grandma said she has been. And in spite of how upsetting she can be at times, I must admit that I admire her greatly. She's genuine through and through. I know this. There's no pretense with Grandma. She's transparent. I like this. And, while she makes me extremely angry at times, I'm overwhelmed at her boldness to speak up for the Lord."

"We've failed you, Torrie, your father and I. I want you to forgive me. You've had all you need of material things, but we deprived you of the one and only all-important thing -- your soul's welfare. I know the way, Torrie; but only you can do what is needful and necessary to get into Heaven. Jesus

said, '. . . Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Only through the Blood of Jesus can we be washed of our sins and become born again."

"Do you... I mean, are you going to... change, Mother? Are you going to be born again?"

Tears swam in Sarah's dark eyes. "Oh, Torrie, I want to! I do! I've never been truly happy since I crowded the blessed Lord and Savior out of my heart. Never! Outside of Christ, there is no peace and rest: in Christ, one has a foretaste of Heaven. Yes, I want to come back to Jesus: I want to be born again. God put Grandma here to stir our hearts and to get us thinking about spiritual things. The Lord sent her here to get us ready for Heaven."

Torrie got to her feet and looked longingly at her mother. "Show me the way; will you, please?" she asked. "I'm so very unhappy and unfulfilled, and Grandma's prayers are making me more so every day."

"Well, bless the Lord!" a pleasant voice exclaimed from the living room leading into the kitchen. "You're coming Home, Sarah dear. Yes, you're coming Home. Now get on your knees and I'll pray with you. 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.' My Sarah's coming Home."

Obediently, brokenly and penitently, mother and daughter knelt. Grandma, blessing and praising the Lord in a strong, clear voice, laid a hand on each head and began to pray.