

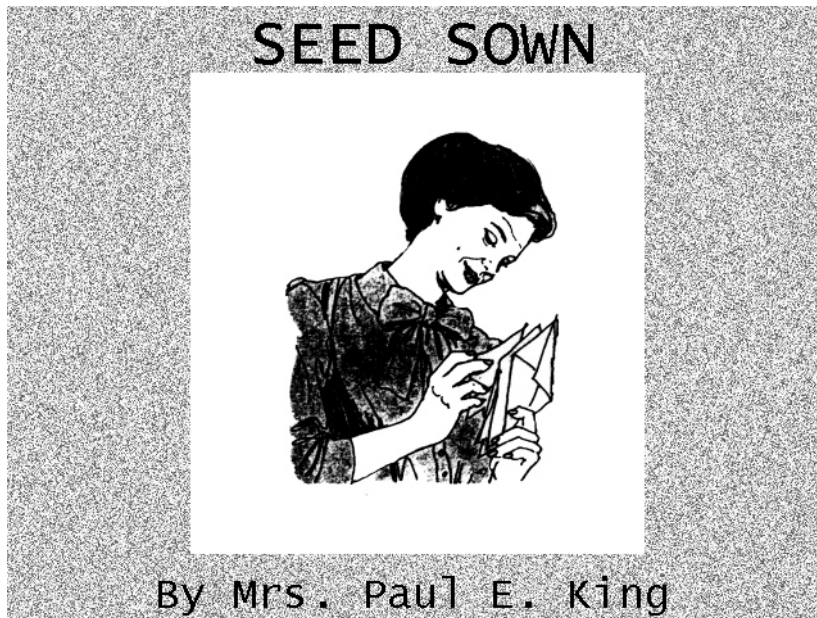
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SEED SOWN
By Mrs. Paul E. King

Joan scanned the mail that arrived in her box. The handwriting on one of the envelopes captured her attention immediately. It was familiar, somehow. She had seen it before, a long time ago. It looked like Lana's. But, no, it couldn't be: they had lost track of each other after graduating from school. Lana had gone her way and she, Joan, had moved away to pursue

her studies in a distant state at a Bible college. So, from whom was it? It certainly looked for all the world like that of her long-ago friend. But was it?

She took the mail into the kitchen and sorted through it, discarding what she mentally labeled junk mail and which the postmaster called bulk mail. Then she placed the religious periodicals together and sat down to read the five letters in her hand. Two were from friends of hers, one was from her mother, another from an aunt who lived along the California coast, and the fifth one was from someone with a postmark in Vermont.

Always, her mothers letters were opened eagerly and read first. How she loved hearing from her beloved parent! News from home was read and reread, then read again. Her mother was adept at letter writing; her letters were lengthy and newsy. They were pictorial paragraphs that carried her back to where she had found the Lord Jesus Christ in saving grace and sanctifying power as a little girl of ten summers.

"Mrs. Dorman prays for you every day," her mother wrote. "You are the first one mentioned in her early morning prayers, Jan. Kneeling by the rocker in her room, with tears falling down her porcelain-white cheeks, she intercedes for you. She's 88 now, you know. Her mind is still sharp and active and extremely alert. To spiritual things especially."

"God bless dear Mrs. Dorman," Jan said aloud through her tears.

Immediately her mind went to Rosewood Cottage and to her mother: her dear, dear mother. Not one to sit and pine dejectedly and despondency over her losses, her mother seven months after the Homegoing of her companion and her mate, had opened her home to two widows older than she Mrs. Dorman and Mrs. Fortner. Each had no one to care for her or about her, it seemed, so Jan's mother had taken on the role of caregiver and loving Christian woman much like that of a daughter, since neither widow had ever had children and Jan's mother was so much younger than either of her charges. Within less than a year of their stay in the home, dubbed by the now deceased husband and father as Rosewood Cottage both women became Christians.

Jan wept as she finished reading her mother's letter. They were tears of homesickness and joy. Then, placing the letter on the little kitchen table in

her tiny apartment for rereading after she had read the four others, she opened the Vermont-stamped letter and began reading:

My dear Jan, it began. (Wonder of wonder, it was from Lana!)

Years and miles may have separated us but not memories and happenings; they have remained with me like a haunting melody. Especially something you told me when I began getting involved with the new girl who came to school the last half of our senior year. That was seven, almost eight years ago, remember?

Patsy was outgoing and winsome, not to say charming. Well, your spiritual radar was right on cue, Jan. And mine? Need I say that it was totally inactive and dead!?

I'll never forget how you warned me in your shy but kind and loving way -- not to listen to the things Patsy was telling me. "It's a cult, Lana." you said soberly but emphatically.

Oh Jan, how I wish I had listened to you when you informed me what would happen if I ever became involved in a cult. But I didn't. Patsy's "witnessing" was like nothing I had ever heard. She was eloquent in "delivery" -- of her message for and about the group with which she was involved and in which she was steeped and entrenched. And I "swallowed it" every part of it. I began going with Patsy and her friends to these "gatherings." I inadvertently addressed these meeting places as a church. But I was rebuked sharply and strongly by the then leader a Mr. Hobbes, that I must never call our meeting place a church: it was a gathering.

I should have known then that something wasn't right; but I liked many of the things that were being done and I thought everything was on the up and up, since each of us was treated like we were members of a family.

I married Bob Summit one year after I graduated from high school. Bob was a year ahead of us in school, you will recall, and was my steady the year we graduated. Patsy convinced Bob that the way she was going, and down which I was following was right. So we became faithful attenders and devout followers of the new leader Alan Renfer. (Mr. Hobbes left suddenly and without any explanation as to the why of his leaving, although rumor had it that most of the money left with him.) Be that as it may, Bob and I began having problems. Serious problems. He felt this Alan Renfer was paying too

much attention to some of his female followers, coming to our homes when our husbands were at work, wanting us to help him in the interior decorating of the huge building in which we were all to be housed and live together as one big family, etc.

The thought of selling our little three-bedroom house was painful and scary, to put it mildly. Bob said he wouldn't do it, especially not since Mr. Renfer said the monies would all go into a common fund and each of us would be cared for out of this fund. I told him Patsy informed me that we had no other choice, that should we disobey and not conform to our leaders demands we would pay dearly for it and suffer the consequences.

Oh Jan, you can't imagine what we suffered. Talk about tyranny! Bob refused to comply. Then he stopped going to their gatherings at all. I was pulled between loyalty to my husband and loyalty to these "gatherings." Patsy and Alan threatened me and our three children -- beyond any describing telling me what would happen if I left them and the "group." And all the time Bob's and my marriage was disintegrating and falling to pieces.

The proverbial last straw came when Mr. Renfer tried to force me to leave my husband and take up permanent residence at The Hide-Away Haven, the name for the now completely remodeled building into which many of the group had moved and were living. He threatened me with horrifying statements.

I knew my parents had always practiced and believed that a marriage was to be a lifelong thing: that each was to stay with his or her mate until death parted them. I never was deeply religious, as you will recall, Jan, but I knew that somewhere in God's Holy Bible my parents were following words from that sacred Book by keeping their marriage vows intact. I knew that I must do the same.

At Bob's insistence, I dropped out and stopped going to the gatherings. Talk about harassment and scary-strange happenings." We had it all. Over and over. Threats too. That's when I thought of you, and how quietly and confidently you went your way in spite of dire circumstances and deep waters or great trials and troubles. "the Lord is my helper." you told me once, when I asked you how you could remain so calm and sweet and unruffled when some of your fellow classmates made it rough and hard on you for standing against something that was wrong.

Jan, for the first time in my life, I began to read the Bible I knew I needed something to help me; something to steer and guide me and my mixed-up thoughts. My world seemed topsy-turvy. I wanted something to cling to: something I could believe in. Your life, with its unchanging faith and trust in God and its continual stability and steadfastness in Christ, came before me as a guiding star. I knew where the source of your great inner strength came from, for you had told me about it countless times.

I read and read, then read some more from the Bible. That precious Book revealed more about my inner self than I could ever have imagined I saw myself as God saw me. I felt utterly dirty, defiled, wicked and unclean. Where to go? What to do? He had all the answers for me in His Book. I followed and obeyed His words: I repented, confessed forsook and asked Him for mercy and pardon and forgiveness and He came into my heart. I know your Savior, Jan. I am forgiven. Born again -- St. John 3:3. Converted -- Matthew 18:3. All glory to His worthy name.

Bob was some time in coming this way. Little wonder: I had helped lead him down the cultist way after we were married. So, without being pushy or repulsive, I asked him to read the Bible. At first he refused. Then, seeing the drastic changes in me and in my life, he said to me one morning, "Jan, show me where to begin reading. You are a new woman. I have the sweetest wife God ever created. I want to know for myself how this happened and what I must do to be like this little woman of mine is."

To God be the glory -- all the glory! -- less than two weeks later, Bob became converted. We are now one in Christ, Jan, and our home is a heaven on each. Our two little girls have given their hearts to Jesus and I know Jordan will do so when he's old enough to understand. He's 2 1/2. Jessica's our oldest she's 6. Janelle's 4 1/2. We are now attending a spiritual Holiness church in our area and both Bob and I are earnestly seeking to be sanctified wholly. I remember of you mentioning this to me, saying that the Holy Spirit within you cleansed out the old nature of inbred sin and filled you with Divine Love, which enabled you to stay calm and sweet under all circumstances. Jan, by God's grace, I will prevail in prayer until I know that the Holy Spirit abides and resides in my heart. You sowed seeds of righteousness in your sweet, shy way. Today, they are growing and flourishing in my life. Bob's too.

I am delighted to know that you are teaching in a Christian day school, something you had dreamed of doing. How I wish Bob and I could have our little ones under your care. This would be our dream come true. But who knows? It may yet happen. The pastor and his church board are discussing plans to begin their own Christian day school as soon as possible. And guess what, Jan: Bob and I are praying that, if this would be God's will, the church will call you here to teach. "With God all things are possible" (Matt. 19:26). Amen.

I must close for this time. But I wanted you to know that God brought your gently planted spiritual "seeds" into growing and blooming. I love you. Write when and if time allows. It was wonderful hearing your mother's sweet voice again. I called her about your whereabouts, address and such.

Take care, and do rejoice with Bob and me over His movings and leadings in our lives and over our great deliverance from sin -- and from that cult.

Much love,
Lana.

Jan spread the letter out on a kitchen chair then she knelt down and prayed over it, offering up praises of thanksgiving to the Lord for giving the harvest.

THE END