



THE BOARDER

Bill and Jane have a boarder in their home. He's been with them for many years now. In fact, he joined their family soon after they were married. I could never understand why a young married couple would want to take a third party into their home, but Jane assured me that he was no trouble at all. It seemed to me that they quite enjoyed having him in their home. He was usually very quiet, speaking only when asked to do so, and yet full of the most interesting stories that you could imagine. It was easy to spend a whole evening listening to him. He was very imaginative and certainly knew how to keep his audience spellbound...

A Tale of Influence...

Edited by Margaret Lepke

This story is based on an article Margaret read some twenty years ago. God knows the original author, and all thanks go to her.

The Boarder

A Tale of Influence

Almost 20 years ago I read an article about a boarder that I have never forgotten. I have not been able to source it, but the Lord knows the faithful woman who put together the original story. We shall give all credit to her. I hope that this edited version will touch you as much as the original one did me:

Bill and Jane have a boarder in their home. He's been with them for many years now. In fact, he joined their family soon after they were married. I could never understand why a young married couple would want to take a third party into their home, but Jane assured me that he was no trouble at all. It seemed to me that they quite enjoyed having him in their home. He was usually very quiet, speaking only when asked to do so, and yet full of the most interesting stories that you could imagine. It was easy to spend a whole evening listening to him. He was very imaginative and certainly knew how to keep his audience spellbound.

As time passed, however, I couldn't help wondering if this boarder was such a good idea. Jane and Bill spent many evenings engrossed in his stories, which seemed to be so worldly. When I once mentioned this to Jane, she laughed at me and declared that I was 'too square'. After all, that's the way the world is, and what harm could it possibly do to hear about how the other side lives?

Then Bill and Jane had a family, just like us. These were hectic times: the baby crying, dinner on the stove, the other children fighting about toys. Would I remain sane? I must admit that I envied Jane, because she had it much easier. She had her wonderful boarder to help out, who kept her children quiet and occupied. The stories he told them were totally enthralling, and they would sit on the floor listening in rapt attention. And Jane was convinced her children were learning so much from the boarder that they would be way ahead in school.



But I couldn't help feeling somewhat uneasy when I learned about some of the stories her children talked about. The boarder's stories seemed to be full of worldly ideas, broken families, children who didn't listen to their parents, homes that were full of materialistic things, dancing, movie-going, and rock music. There seemed to be hardly any mention of families praying together, going to church, and living godly lives.



In fact, it seemed to me that the boarder taught the children things that were in conflict with the very principles Bill and Jane were trying to teach their children. For they were certainly doing their best to bring them up in a Christian home: they were regular churchgoers, always had devotions at meal times, and sent their children to a Christian school. Yet they couldn't see that every night the boarder in his stories contradicted their Bible reading immediately after dinner.

As the children grew older, they seemed to need more excitement to hold their attention, and the boarder's stories became increasingly disturbing. There were lots of bad guys (often the heroes), car chases and killings, gangs and weird space monsters. When I dared to mention to Jane that the boarder's stories were getting more and more opposed to the Biblical message they were trying to teach their children, she thought I was too alarmist. The children, she said, could easily distinguish between reality and fantasy stories. And the fact that they constantly heard about murders and other forms of violence wouldn't desensitise them to God's commands.

When their children were teenagers, Bill and Jane were frequently away from home, but the boarder was there to look after them. Only now, his stories were full of sexual overtones. The children weren't upset about nakedness, unmarried people sleeping together, or even homosexual relationships. After all, this was part of the reality of life, wasn't it?

But slowly a revelation was sinking into the minds of Bill and Jane. Their children were not turning out quite as they had expected. They didn't like the way their children dressed, the music they listened to, and the activities they participated in: movies, nightclubs and parties where alcohol and drugs were present. They had the dreadful suspicion that their children were participating in premarital sex and, above all, the children were not willing to listen to them. Curfews were ignored, and parental opinions were laughed at as being old-fashioned.



Bill and Jane were stunned. What could possibly have gone wrong? Hadn't they done their very best? Hadn't they always given a good example, had a Christian home life, gone faithfully to church, and sent their children to the right schools? It must be the fault of the teachers! Or the church isn't appealing enough! The minister is too dry and dull in his sermons! Maybe we've overdone it with religion, and the poor kids are sick of it by now.

It never occurred to them that the fault was present in their very own home: the boarder. All these years they had allowed him to do his thing. He had filled the minds of their children with ideas and values that were completely opposed to those of the Bible. For years he had fed them a diet of violence, sex, materialism, pleasure seeking and worldliness. But even now Bill and Jane deny that this had any effect on their children. After all, they had always understood that this was all fantasy, and that their family lived differently in reality.

In fact, if you were to visit Bill and Jane's home today, you would probably find them sitting in front of their boarder still, watching him do his stuff. As for the children, they'll grow out of it. All those years of teaching have to have some effect, don't they?

Have you guessed who the boarder is? No? He's the television set in Bill and Jane's lounge room!

