

Read this excerpt from *Hind's Feet on High Places* by Hannah Hurnard

Read these selections with the goal of noticing Much-Afraid's relationships, her habits, and the ideas she trusts to be true. Watch how these impact and influence her life for good—or not.

PART ONE

"Weeping May Endure for A Night" (Psalm 30:5)

Invitation to the High Places

This is the story of how Much-Afraid escaped from her Fearing relatives and went with the Shepherd to the High Places where "perfect love casteth out fear."

For several years Much-Afraid had been in the service of the Chief Shepherd, whose great flocks were pastured down in the Valley of Humiliation. She lived with her friends and fellow workers Mercy and Peace in a tranquil little white cottage in the village of MuchTrembling. She loved her work and desired intensely to please the Chief Shepherd, but happy as she was in most ways, she was conscious of several things which hindered her in her work and caused her much secret distress and shame.

In the first place, she was a cripple, with feet so crooked that they often caused her to limp and stumble as she went about her work. She had also the very unsightly blemish of a crooked mouth which greatly disfigured both expression and speech and was sadly conscious that these ugly blemishes must be a cause of astonishment and offense to many who knew that she was in the service of the great Shepherd.

Most earnestly she longed to be completely delivered from these shortcomings and to be made beautiful, gracious, and strong as were so many of the Shepherd's other workers, and above all to be made like the Chief Shepherd himself. But she feared that there could be no deliverance from these two crippling disfigurements and that they must continue to mar her service always.

There was, however, another and even greater trouble in her life. She was a member of the Family of Fearings, and her relatives were scattered all over the valley, so that she could never really escape from them. An orphan, she had been brought up in the home of her aunt, poor Miss Dismal Forebodings, with her two cousins Gloomy and Spiteful and their brother Craven Fear, a great bully who habitually tormented and persecuted her in a really dreadful way.

Like most of the other families who lived in the Valley of Humiliation, all the Fearings hated the Chief Shepherd and tried to boycott his servants, and naturally it was a great offense to them

that one of their own family should have entered his service. Consequently, they did all they could both by threats and persuasions to get her out of his employment, and one dreadful day they laid before her the family dictum that she must immediately marry her cousin Craven Fear and settle down respectably among her own people. If she refused to do this of her own free will, they threatened to use force and compel her.” (pp. 5-6)

Later in the Chapter

“She walked singing across the first field and was halfway over the next when suddenly she saw Craven Fear himself coming toward her. Poor Much-Afraid: for a little while she had completely forgotten the existence of her dreadful relatives, and now here was the most dreaded and detested of them all slouching toward her. Her heart filled with a terrible panic. She looked right and left, but there was no hiding place anywhere, and besides it was all too obvious that he was actually coming to meet her, for as soon as he saw her he quickened his pace and in a moment or two was right beside her.

With a horror that sickened her very heart, she heard him say, “Well, here you are at last, little Cousin Much-Afraid. So we are to be married, eh, what do you think of that?” and he pinched her, presumably in a playful manner, but viciously enough to make her gasp and bite her lips to keep back a cry of pain.

She shrank away from him and shook with terror and loathing. Unfortunately, this was the worst thing she could have done, for it was always her obvious fear which encouraged him to continue tormenting her. If only she could have ignored him, he soon would have tired of teasing and of her company and would have wandered off to look for other prey. In all her life, however, Much-Afraid had never been able to ignore Fear. Now it was absolutely beyond her power to conceal the dread at which she felt.” (pp. 12-13)

Later in the chapter “Start for the High Places”

“It was early morning of a beautiful day. The valley lay as though still asleep. The only sounds were the joyful laughter of the running streams and the gay little songs of the birds. The dew sparkled on the grass and the wildflowers glowed like little jewels. Especially lovely were the anemones, purple, pink and scarlet, which dotted the pastures everywhere, thrusting their beautiful little faces up through the straggling thorns. Sometimes the Shepherd and Much-Afraid walked over patches of thousands of tiny little pink or mauve blossoms, each minutely small and yet all together forming a brilliant carpet, far richer than any seen in a king’s palace.

Once the Shepherd stooped and touched the flowers gently with his fingers, then said to Much-Afraid with a smile, "Humble yourself, and you will find that Love is spreading a carpet of flowers beneath your feet."

Much-Afraid looked at him earnestly. "I have often wondered about the wildflowers," she said. "It does seem strange that such unnumbered multitudes should bloom in the wild places of the earth where perhaps nobody sees them and the goats and the cattle can walk over them and crush them to death. They have so much beauty and sweetness to give and no one on whom to lavish it, nor who will even appreciate it."

The look the Shepherd turned on her was very beautiful. "Nothing my Father and I have made is ever wasted," he said quietly, "and the little wildflowers have a wonderful lesson to teach. They offer themselves so sweetly and confidently and willingly, even if it seems that there is no one to appreciate them. Just as though they sang a joyous little song to themselves, that it is so happy to love, even though one is not loved in return.

"I must tell you a great truth, Much-Afraid, which only the few understand. All the fairest beauties in the human soul, its greatest victories, and its most splendid achievements are always those which no one else knows anything about, or can only dimly guess at. Every inner response of the human heart to Love and every conquest over self-love is a new flower on the tree of Love.

"Many a quiet, ordinary, and hidden life, unknown to the world, is a veritable garden in which Love's flowers and fruits have come to such perfection that it is a place of delight where the King of Love himself walks and rejoices with his friends.

Some of my servants have indeed won great visible victories and are rightly loved and revered by other men, but always their greatest victories are like the wild flowers, those which no one knows about. Learn this lesson now, down here in the valley, Much-Afraid, and when you get to the steep places of the mountains it will comfort you." (pp. 26-27)

In the chapter, "On the Shores of Loneliness"

This note: Sorrow and Suffering are guides the Good Shepherd has chosen to lead Much-Afraid to the High Places.

"... Far away in the Valley of Humiliation, her relatives had been waiting the return of Pride with his victim, but as time passes and he did not return and Much-Afraid did not reappear it becomes obvious that he must have been unsuccessful in his undertaking and was too proud to

admit it. They decided that reinforcements must be sent as soon as possible, before Much-Afraid could reach the really High Places and be altogether beyond their reach.

Spies were sent out, who met Pride and brought back word that Much-Afraid was nowhere on the mountains but was far away on the shores of the Sea of Loneliness. She was going in quite a different direction from the mountains altogether. This was unexpectedly delightful and encouraging news, and quickly suggested to them the best reinforcements to be sent to the help of Pride. There was complete unanimity in deciding that Resentment, Bitterness, and Self-Pity should hurry off at once to assist in bringing back Much-Afraid to her eagerly-awaiting relatives.

Off they went to the shores of Loneliness, and Much-Afraid now had to endure a time of really dreadful assaults. It is true that her enemies soon discovered that this was not the same Much-Afraid with whom they had to deal. They could never get within close reach, because she kept so near to Sorrow and Suffering and accepted their assistance so much more willingly than before. However, they kept appearing before her, shouting out their horrid suggestions and mocking her until it really seemed that wherever she went one or another popped up (there were so many hiding-places for them among the rocks) and hurled their darts at her.

“I told you so,” Pride would shout viciously. “Where are you now, you little fool? Up on the High Places? Not much! Do you know that everyone in the Valley of Humiliation knows about this and is laughing at you? Seeking your heart’s desire, eh, and left abandoned by him (just as I warned you) on the shores of Loneliness. Why didn’t you listen to me, you little fool?”

Then Resentment would raise his head over another rock. He was extremely ugly to look at, but his was a horribly fascinating ugliness. Sometimes Much-Afraid could hardly turn her eyes away when he started at her boldly and shouted, “You know, Much-Afraid, you act like a blind idiot. Who is this Shepherd you follow? What sort of person is he to demand everything you have and take everything you offer and give nothing in return but suffering and sorrow and ridicule and shame? Why do you let him treat you like this? Stand up for yourself and demand that he fulfill his promise and take you at once to the High Places. If not, tell him that you feel absolved from all necessity to follow him any longer.”

Bitterness would then break in with his sneering voice, “The more you yield to him, the more he will demand from you. He is cruel to you, and takes advantage of your devotion. All he has demanded from you so far is nothing to what he will demand if you persist in following him. He lets his followers, yes, even women and children, go to concentration camps and torture chambers and hideous deaths of all kinds. Could you bear that, you little whiner? Then you’d

better pull out and leave him before he demands the uttermost sacrifice of all. Sooner or later, he'll put you on a cross of some sort and abandon you to it."

Self-Pity would chime in next, and in some dreadful way, he was almost worse than any of the others. He talked so softly and in such a pitying tone that Much-Afraid would feel weak all over. "Poor little Much-Afraid," he would whisper. "It is too bad, you know. You really are so devoted, and you have refused him nothing, absolutely nothing; yet this is the cruel way in which he treats you. Can you really believe when he acts toward you like this that he loves you and has your real good at heart? How can that be possible?"

"You have every right to feel sorry for yourself...." (pp. 48-50)