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## **Daffodil Hill**

**By Mrs. Paul E. King**

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### Chapter 1

Darkness came early -- almost without warning -- to the young teen riding away in the streamlined coach of the train. Holding her chin up high to keep it from trembling, and squeezing her eyes shut tight lest the tears locked behind the closed eyelids run free-course down her lovely, desert-tanned cheeks, Abigail leaned her head back against the velvet softness of the upholstered seat in which she sat, silently quoting Scripture verses which she had memorized and to which she frequently resorted for comfort and consolation in times of deep sorrow, trials and distress.



Her beloved and saintly, now-deceased mother would not want her to weep and pine over the fact that she was being uprooted and taken away from everything and everyone who was ever dear and precious and meaningful to her heart and life, she knew. God was not confined to any one particular section of the country, nor was He less interested in those who lived in the eastern section of her homeland than those who, like herself, had lived all their lives in the west, she rationalized consolingly. God was everywhere, and the promises of His constancy and His presence to His blood-washed saints was to one as well as to another, regardless of states and boundaries.

Opening her eyes slightly for one last glimpse of the familiar surroundings of her home town, Abigail peered out into the night. The few faint lights she saw seemed to be blinking at her..., blinking and bidding her a final, sad farewell.

Pushing her head of beautiful long, thick black hair tightly against the soft velvet cushion, she drew her breath in quick-like to circumvent the too-near-to-surface sob which rose involuntarily inside her chest and tore at the corners of her already-broken heart. She must be brave, she told herself-brave and courageous and full of faith like her mother, whose body she was leaving behind in the treeless, barren cemetery outside the town.

The sparse vegetation and lack of trees in the low desert country gave impetus to the onrushing night. By now, the fifteen-year-old girl recalled sadly and with sensation of inward pain, the barren sands, which short hours ago had been oven-hot beneath a blazing sun, would be soothing and cool. They would be whispering, too, whispering and shifting and moving as the chill night breezes fanned them. How often she had stood outside listening and thrilling to their sound, wondering what they were saying and marveling at their restlessness. How she loved the peace and tranquillity of her humble but clean desert home! She was as much a part of this land as were the numerous cacti that bloomed and bare fruit and flourished on the hot desert floor, she mused sadly. Would she ever again see the cacti in bloom, and would she ever hear the gentle "swish, swish" of the shifting, restless sand? she wondered, blinking back the tears.

With little to sustain an afterglow and with neither moon nor stars to temper the dark, the night, to Abigail, became more than a word or an awareness; its blackness became tangible. Yet she did not fear it; rather, she loved it. It had been as much a part of her everyday life as had the blazing, glaring sun's daffy rising. It was all a routine something with which she was very familiar and in which she felt comfortable and sheltered. And now she was leaving it all behind! By morning, she would be miles and miles away from everything familiar and dear to her heart.., the land, her dead father's circuit of small churches and her many friends.

Would Betsy indeed remember to write her? she wondered, opening her small handbag and reading her dearest friend's note, thrust eagerly into her hand just as the train's whistle sounded for the last time before pulling out of the station which, in the early night, looked as desolate and sad as Betsy's countenance did.

What would life be like, living in the east with her mother's younger brother and his wife and their two children -- a seventeen-year-old son and an eighteen-year-old daughter? she wondered suddenly, holding Betsy's note close to her heart for a brief moment before placing it back carefully in the worn handbag.

Daffodil Hill was the name of her uncle's place, she had learned from her mother. It sounded pretty enough, Abigail decided, her slender frame trembling ever so slightly at the thought of the transition. Quickly she thrust the fearsome thoughts aside, instead conjuring up visions of a hillside carpeted from top to bottom in a mass of velvety-soft, satin-smooth, butter-colored flowers tacked securely in the earth by God Himself.

In all of her fifteen years of natural life, she had never so much as seen a daffodil; but, from books which she had read and by her frequent use of a dictionary, she learned that a daffodil was a narrow-leaved, bulbous plant which bore large yellow single or double flowers on a single stalk each spring. That they were beautiful, she hadn't a doubt; all of God's flowers were lovely and beautiful.

She leaned her head against the coolness of the window pane and sighed ever so slightly, hoping that, to a small degree at least, Uncle Matthew would be like her mother had been. He was not a Christian, her father had said two years ago before pneumonia finally put him in the grave.

At thought of her great loss, first her father and now her mother, Abigail wept softly. How she had loved her parents! They had given unselfishly and lovingly of themselves, spending most of their waking moments in calling, visiting and praying in the homes of the people in the scattered, isolated desert towns. Their wages were meager, but the compensation of souls won to Christ was of such value and concern to them that an unknowing onlooker would have thought them exceedingly wealthy and well cared for. They prayed much, laughed frequently, and praised constantly.

Little wonder then, Abigail mused joyously, that she was converted soundly and clearly before she was quite seven summers old and was sanctified wholly shortly thereafter. Holiness of heart and life, and a literal, constant taste of Heaven on earth, had been her daffy -- hourly -- portion of all her life. It was only natural then that she should have desired and obtained that which her parents had exemplified moment by moment.

"Oh, God," she cried softly into her hands, "whatever my lot may be in the home where I am to live, help me to shine for Thee, and keep my inner, spiritual life aglow with Thy glory and Thy Presence!"

She fell asleep praying, and when she finally opened her eyes, her neck felt stiff and painful from the awkward position in which it had been leaning against the window. She sat forward in her seat and massaged the stiff, cramped neck muscles vigorously; then she looked around her. The wheels of the speeding train sounded soothing and companionable, and the dim lights, shining here and there along the aisle of the coach, gave a dreamy air to the streamliner's interior. All around her was the sound of soft, rhythmic breathing as her fellow-travelers and companions slept. She had the feeling of alone-ness and relished it. It would be a good time for Bible reading and meditation, she decided, turning the small light on above her seat and opening the Bible to where she had left off reading earlier.

Abigail read until her eyes grew heavy with sleep. Then she turned the light off and, with the Bible still open in her lap, she drifted off to sleep again.

The sun was streaming warmly through the window when she opened her eyes and people were milling up and down the aisle of the coach. An air of jollity seemed to be

pervasive. Abigail smiled, being caught up in the pleasant, infectious laughter of a group of older people sitting in front of her.

Before the day was far advanced several of the aged women had taken her under their motherly, protective "wings" and Abigail had the grand privilege of witnessing to them about Christ.

The train sped on and so did the day. Abigail stared through the window at the ever-changing scenery the mountain streams, churning up foam and tumbling over rocks or cascading down a mountain whose sides were literally covered with beautiful towering evergreen trees from top to bottom. Everywhere she looked she saw life in some form of greenery or blooming thing. It was almost breath-taking and the girl on more than one occasion, found herself gasping over the spectacular beauty that unfolded at the end of each tunnel and the rounding of each bend. She had seen pictures of this kind of scenery, but the pictures, for all their lovely color and careful focusing in upon their subject, could never do justice to the magnificent sight which her eyes were beholding.

She sighed with relief and a confident heart-confident in the knowledge, that a God who made such a beautiful world out of nothing could keep her beautiful and untarnished and unstained by sin regardless of her surroundings and the circumstances in which she was placed. Happy tears filled her great, dark eyes at the comforting thought.

Tomorrow, the Lord willing, she would arrive at her uncle and aunt's home, she mused silently. Everything would be strange and different, like her relatives whom she had never met or seen. Two things, however, would be the same: the precious, unchanging Word of God and her ever-present, wonderful Lord and Saviour.

Opening her Bible, Abigail began reading, a sure way of driving away fearful thoughts and thoughts of fear, her mother had often told her.

The girl read on and on and the train, with each turn of its powerful wheels, took her closer to the home of perfect strangers.

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## Chapter 2

Late afternoon the following day, Abigail, looking calm and collected, sat forward on the edge of her seat. Within a few minutes she would be at her destination; her long journey was finally over. The desert, with all of its beauty and fascination to her, seemed eons away. Oh, how very much she would miss it, she thought, feeling more lonely than she had ever felt. She loved the desert.., loved it! For all its barrenness and seeming desolation, she loved it. It had been her home-her land. A part of her would always be there, she was sure.

Stifling a sob, she turned quickly toward the window. What she saw made her gasp in awe and wonder. Before her lay the whole valley in which her uncle lived. She had never imagined it like this: a tiny finger of civilization set in a sweeping expanse of dark forest. The black treetops seemed to crowd against the yards, the houses, the roads, giving the impression that at any moment the trees would close over the houses like waves and leave nothing but an unbroken line of black-green leaves waving and dancing in the golden sunlight.

Looking over the valley, she saw numerous hills. They seemed to overlap and intercept each other. On the side of one of the hills a herd of cows were grouped together, looking like they were deep in consolation with each other. Abigail felt like laughing. How very serious they looked, she thought.

In a moment, she saw the reason for their unusual stance. Coming up the hillside was a young boy; by his side was a beautiful collie. They were going after the cows. Taking them home, no doubt, for the evening milking, she theorized as she saw the gentle, docile animals follow the boy and clog down a well-worn path and disappear completely among the tall trees.

The conductor was calling out her station stop when she finally pulled herself away from the window with its spectacular view of the country-side, and, with a fixed heart that whatever God allowed to come to her in this new environment she would accept as His will and for her good, she stepped off the train, her Bible and small handbag held in her hand.

She was almost to the door of the station when a man's voice said, "Pardon me, but aren't you Abigail Jorgenssen?"

Abigail spun around quickly. "Ye . . . yes, Sir. I'm Abigail," she stuttered. "And you are Uncle Matthew? I'm pleased to meet you."

"The pleasure is mine," came the quick reply. "My, but you do look like Anna -- when she was young, that is."

"My mother was a very beautiful and lovely person," Abigail declared. "So was my father."

Matthew Templeton surveyed his niece carefully. Then he replied, "Perhaps so, but it seems a shame that your father should have taken his bride -- my sister -- to such an isolated, desolate and God-forsaken land as he did and leave her there to die. And at such an early age, too."

It was Abigail's turn for scrutiny now. In a single glance, she noticed her uncle's carefully styled hair, his expensive, well-tailored suit and the firm set of his square jaw. He was an unusually handsome man whose perfectly shaped Roman nose gave classic

features to his profile. Except for the nose, there was such a strong resemblance of her mother that Abigail discovered tears had sprung into her eyes.

"My . . . my father was the dearest, noblest, most God-like man I have ever known," she said quickly, softly. "And the land was not God-forsaken. We had glorious revivals out there. Mother was so happy, working with father for God and His cause. So was I. I do wish you could have been in some of our services. God was there! My father was a great preacher, and such a wonderful shepherd of his flocks. ' "

Matthew "ahemmed" several times and cleared his throat equally as often; then he said quickly, "I'll get your trunks and your luggage. Then we'll go home. Marielle didn't come with me so we'd have enough room for all your belongings. By the way, Marielle's my wife."

"That was thoughtful of you, Uncle Matthew, but I don't have very many personal things: two large suitcases and one a bit smaller, to be exact. Mr. and Mrs. Babbitt checked the two large pieces of luggage through on my ticket. That's all you'll need to get. Here are the claim tickets," Abigail said, laying them in her uncle's hand.

"I'll put you and that small piece of luggage you're carrying in the car first; then I'll get the other two pieces, Abigail," Matthew said, taking the suitcases from her hand and leading the way to where a long, sleek, shiny automobile stood waiting. Then he headed back to the station after the remaining luggage pieces.

The ride homeward was pleasant, and Abigail, in spite of her earlier trepidation and misgivings about her uncle, found him so like her beloved mother in so many ways that her heart felt warmly toward him. If he were a Christian, everything would be wonderful, she mused silently, riding beside him and secretly marveling over the luxury of the ride and the beauty of the car's interior.

She smiled, comparing her father's old, much-used car with its ever-present thick coat of desert dust to the vehicle in which she was now riding. Her uncle's car looked like it had just come out of a showroom; her father's on the other hand, bore the marks of age to such an extent that one wondered if it would make the next mile. It had been a car of mercy -- a car used for visiting the sick and the aged, the discouraged and the sorrowing, and those anxious to go to church.

"Your environment will be different, Abigail," Matthew said quickly, breaking in upon her heart musings and her comparisons. "I believe though, that in time, my niece will come to enjoy our way of life. Your age will be the great contributing factor in helping you to make the transition from your former way of life to our., ah . . . more cultured and . . . and prestigious way. Ian and Carmice will help you and show you how to act and what to do to fit into our society. Like I said, your age is very definitely in your favor. You'll learn how to have fun and..."

Abigail sat suddenly very tall on the seat. "Please, Uncle Matthew," she said quickly, "do not think me an ingrate, but I don't want to change -- not ever! I have been taught the way of Life from my infancy, finding the One altogether lovely to my soul in childhood's tender and impressive years, and the joy of the Lord has been my delight and my satisfying portion ever since. I have no desire to change. Please understand this, will you?"

Her question came out as a heartfelt plea through lips that trembled with emotion.

Matthew Templeton sucked his breath in quick-like, taken aback by the frank statements and her almost tearful entreaty.

Focusing his eyes hard on the narrow ribbon of road ahead and shrugging his broad shoulders nonchalantly, he remarked casually, "The choice is yours, Abigail, of course. But I do think you are a bit young to be taking religion so seriously. Childhood and youth are made for fun and for having a good time. Your mother was always too serious minded. She lived such a dreadfully restricted life."

"It was because she loved the Lord, I'm sure. And to her, it wasn't a restricted life, Uncle Matthew. The road to Heaven is a joyous and delightful way. Have you never wanted to go to Heaven?"

The question, so pointed and personal, left the tall man without an answer. He grasped the steering wheel with fierce intensity; his knuckles showed white with strain. He swallowed several times then changed the subject. It was like he had closed the lids of a book and locked its contents securely inside.

Within a very short time he turned off the blacktop road and wound along a hillside, emerging shortly thereafter at the house. It looked like something out of a magazine, Abigail noticed, gasping at its beauty and its enormity.

"Daffodil Hill. Your new home," Matthew announced, smiling in the same way her mother used to smile, the girl thought with a pang of loneliness.

"It... it's beautiful!" she exclaimed, getting out of the car and inhaling deeply of the clean, sweet-smelling air. "The air smells like it's had a bath," she said softly, filling her lungs to their full capacity then exhaling quickly. "Um-m! It's so fresh and.., and good."

"That's because we had a shower just before I came after you, Abigail. It rains here in the east, frequently. This is the reason why everything looks so green and flourishing. We can't grow the giant saguaro's here, but we do raise tons and tons of grain. But come, Marielle will be anxious to meet you." And Matthew extracted the luggage from the trunk of the car then hurried toward the door.

Giving one last lingering look at the lusciously-green countryside which spread itself like a mammoth, velvet carpet in every direction below the hill, Abigail followed her uncle.

Her aunt met them inside the door. Greeting her husband warmly, Marielle turned her attention to Abigail. "We are so delighted to have you," she stated, appraising the girl's healthy outdoor look with a single glance of her periwinkle-blue eyes. "You are taller than I imagined," she added, smiling.

Abigail, feeling for a brief moment like she was being "sized up" or down like she had seen ranchers do at the auction when wanting to buy cattle, was glad when the introduction was over and the looking and staring was finished.

"Ian is playing with the team," Marielle told Abigail as she led the way up the thickly-carpeted, circular stairway. "He plays ball with a local group; and Carmice is out with Colin. They plan to be married. She'll be nineteen then. Here's your room, Abigail," the aunt said, stepping inside the doorway of an enormous bedroom. "I do hope you'll like it."

"Oh-h! It's beautiful, Aunt Marielle. Beautiful! I love it."

"You have a connecting bath, all to yourself. In fact, all five of our bedrooms have private baths. So there'll be no waiting in line for bathrooms," Marielle said with a note of pride.

"Five bathrooms!" Abigail exclaimed, hardly able to believe what her ears had heard.

"There are seven really -- two downstairs." Seven baths! Abigail wondered why there were so many but kept her questions to herself, coming quickly to the conclusion, however, that her uncle and aunt must be the cleanest people in the entire valley.

"I'll help you unpack if you like, Abigail..." "Thanks, but I can manage. I really appreciate your offer though," Abigail replied, smiling up into the face of her aunt.

"I always prefer doing my own unpacking too when Matt and I go anywhere; so I'll leave you. Come downstairs when you're finished. Dinner will be served at six. This is your home now, Abbey. We want you to enjoy yourself and feel that you are one of us. Ian and Carmice will be introducing you to some of the younger set in our social circle, and Carmice plans a two-day shopping spree with you."

"For what?" the girl asked quickly.

"For a brand new wardrobe of clothes -- the kind you'll need for the young people with whom you'll be friends. And when your sixteenth birthday arrives, we'll have a

special ball for you . . . a 'coming out' party. With that hair of yours, cut a much shorter length, of course, and done up by my hair stylist, well, you'll be a real beauty -- someone whom your uncle and I will be proud of."

Unbidden tears stung Abigail's eyes. Placing a gentle hand over one of her aunt's, she pleaded, "Please, Aunt Marielle, don't ever think of cutting my hair nor of changing my manner of dress! You see, I am a Christian, and the Bible tells me how to dress and how to live. I would backslide and lose my soul in hell should I go against the holy and divine light that I have. My hair has never been cut., not once; God's Word says that a woman's long hair is given to her for her glory. It's a sign and a symbol of her submissiveness...

Aunt Marielle looked aghast, shocked beyond words. "But you must change, Abigail! What will our friends think?"

With that, she hurried down the stairs.

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### Chapter 3

For a long while after her aunt had left the room, Abigail stood as one in shock. Then, pulling herself together, she dropped to her knees beside one of the beautiful, pale lavender velvet, over-stuffed bedroom chairs and poured her heart out to God in fervent prayer. Her mother had told her, before she passed away, to take her stand at the very beginning of her arrival at her uncle's home. "Don't give in, sweetheart," her mother commanded.

"Whatever you do, don't give in and capitulate to their demands. My brother's quite soft at heart. Eventually he'll see that you are right . . . only if you stand. Abigail my dear."

The words, as plain and clear now as when her mother had uttered them on her dying breath, hammered their way afresh into her heart. It was almost as though her precious parents were in the room, begging, pleading and entreating her to stand and to stand firmly.

"I will stand up for Jesus, and for everything in the Bible.;" she exclaimed from the bottom of her heart as tears streamed down the cheeks of her upturned face. "By God's grace, I will stand!"

With the firm declaration, uttered from a trusting, fully-yielded and wholly-committed heart, came relief and a heaven-sent peace. Getting to her feet, Abigail began unpacking.

Hanging the dresses on hangers inside the spacious walk-in closet in her room, she pressed her lips to a creamy-beige colored dress. It was the last dress her mother made for her; a birthday present for her fifteenth year. Like all her clothes, it was modest and beautifully made. She was especially fond of the mandarin collar with its four rows of narrow, over-lapping, matching lace, and sleeves with cuffs of the same. The tiny tucks down the front of the bodice each had lace attached lovingly and carefully to their edge, giving the dress a look of total femininity.

Caressing the dress a final time, Abigail finished putting clothing in drawers then shut the luggage and stored it on the top shelf inside the closet. Taking a quick bath and changing into fresh, clean clothing, she tucked the stray wisps of hair into place then started down the hallway toward the stairs.

"Hi, cousin," a voice greeted her from behind.

Startled, she jumped as though she'd been touched with an ice cube, then spun around so fast that she almost lost her balance.

"Hey, I didn't mean to scare you! I'm Ian. Don't look so frightened. I'm not a ghost; I'm your cousin."

In spite of her former fright, Abigail began to laugh. "I'm sorry, Ian," she apologized.

"You really did frighten me. You see, I didn't know you were home. Your mother said you were gone."

"Right," he answered, smiling broadly, "I was gone. I just now got home. And say, we're sure glad you've come to live with us. We've needed someone new to infuse new life into our parties."

Abigail looked at Ian for a moment. He looked older than his seventeen years, she thought, more like a man than the teenager he was. He had a rather lean but kindly face, thick unruly hair and remarkably clear gray eyes, so like her dear father's, who was no blood relation at all but was the boy's uncle through marriage.

"Your crowd would find me extremely dull and boring," she said straightforward in a kind voice. "I am a Christian, Ian; I don't party."

"You're kidding!" came the immediate reply.

"Not at all. It's the truth. I've been converted since a short while before I was seven years old. I love the Lord with all of my heart and soul and mind and body."

"Whew! That's saying a lot. That means you love Him with all there is of you! That isn't possible, Abigail, is it?"

"Not in the natural man; but in the spiritual, yes. After my glorious heart-change -- conversion -- I sought and obtained sanctification, or holiness of heart, and since that day, I belong completely to Him. He means everything to me."

"Coming from you, it sounds great. But I guess I can't truthfully say that I'd want anything that so occupied and possessed me. I enjoy what I'm doing. I'm having fun, Abigail."

"But do you have peace?"

Ian laughed nervously. "Don't quiz me too much," he teased. "I may make a failing grade if you do. But say, I'd better get showered and cleaned up. We eat at six, sharp!" and turning on his heels, he hurried down the hallway to his room.

Abigail sighed, wondering what lay ahead for her and thankful that, so far, there had been no antagonism registered toward her when she took her stand for her convictions and for what was right and holy. But there was still Carmice. What was she like? she wondered, thinking how very strange and odd their names were .... Marielle, Carmice, and Ian. Her uncle alone had a sensible name, she temporized, but she would keep that thought to herself. Names, like so many other things, were a matter of preference and of personal opinion, and it was all too obvious that her relatives had no taste or desire for the biblical names which had meaning and relayed an instant message at their repeating.

She was almost at the foot of the stairs when her aunt's voice floated to her from a room not far away. She was speaking to her husband; her voice sounded both anxious and distressed.

"Whatever are we going to do?" Marielle asked. "I knew her parents went overboard over religion, but I had no idea that Abigail was like this, too. What will we tell our friends?"

"The truth, of course. It's the only thing to do. Perhaps I'm not a Christian, but I know enough to never stand in the way of one who is, nor to hinder him in any way."

"But she's so very young, Matt, to be so . . . so involved in it!"

"Not it, my dear. It's an involvement with a Person. And, in a way, I almost envy her."

Abigail heard her aunt gasp in horror.

"Oh, I know it's not right to be envious . . . I know a lot of right things, Marielle," her uncle continued, "but the girl has such a . . . a beautiful something about her, and such an innocent forthrightness for what is right. She is like my mother, dear, and like my ever-religious and deeply-spiritual sister -- her mother. I felt it the moment I saw her as she was getting off the train. She has a spiritual backbone like my father had."

Marielle sighed. "I wonder how our friends will take this," she remarked, sounding for the world like she had taken a seat in wit's end corner. "It's going to be humiliating, to say the least. And I had such big plans for her..."

Feeling like an eavesdropper, Abigail fled up the stairs, thankful for the thick carpeting which muffled her hasty retreat. Her coming here was by divine appointment, she was sure. In fact, she was more convinced than ever that the arrangement was made by God. Overhearing the conversation in the room below was positive proof. It was a sort of Gideon and the barley cake episode.

She sat in one of the chairs in her room and picked up the Bible, caressing it close to her heart in adoration and love for its divine Author and its exceeding great and precious promises to her. Then she opened it at random. What she read made her heart rejoice. Tears sprang to her eyes. Songs of praise and gratitude welled up from deep inside her soul.

" 'Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace:' " she read aloud from Acts 18:9-10. " 'For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.' "

She bowed her head and allowed her tears to have free course. God was so good, she mused. He had put her here. Why? To witness and to shine for Him.

Lifting her head, her eyes wandered over the room. It was so very beautiful and spacious, "dreamy" really, and the fulfillment of any girl's fondest desire or imagination. She must be on guard at all times lest her soul be swallowed up in earthly material things, she mused soberly. At home, living frugally and carefully was a way of life for her parents and herself. Out of necessity, to be sure, and also because of the family's unselfishness and kindness in assisting the poor and needy., those with less income and little of earth's goods and possessions.

A light tap on the door brought her abruptly out of her vein of serious thought. A moment later a statuesque blonde-haired, golden-tanned beauty stood inside her room.

Abigail got to her feet and moved toward the beautiful young woman. "You must be Carmice," she said softly, flashing a warm smile.

"How right you are, dearest Abigail! Welcome, welcome!" she exclaimed sincerely and smiling broadly, revealing the most beautiful set of teeth Abigail thought she had ever

seen. "We're all ecstatic over the fact that you have come to live with us," she added as an after-thought.

"Thanks, Carmice; thanks a lot. It's so nice to meet you all. I love it here. The house is so lovely and the scenery is simply beautiful!"

"You poor kid," Carmice exclaimed, throwing her arms around Abigail's slender shoulders and hugging her soundly. "I think you're a very brave girl -- coming all this distance by yourself and then having to live with people who have been absolute and perfect strangers to you. Oh, I know we're relation, but who would have surmised it? I mean, well, we never got to see each other; and worse yet, we never even met. But I'm really glad you're here. For keeps, too. Ian's a great brother, but having a sister is super special and nice. I've always wondered what it would be like sharing secrets with a sister, and now I'll know."

Moved by her cousin's frank and sincere statements, Abigail stood speechless for a brief moment. When she spoke, it was with equal sincerity and in a voice filled with emotion. "You are so very kind to say this, Carmice dear," she answered. "I feel doubly honored: I have obtained both a sister and a brother . . . neither of which I have ever had. So you can see that it is I whom God has blest. I know we'll have some wonderful times together."

"You can be sure of that! But say, we'd better hurry downstairs; Maria doesn't relish the idea of having her meals wait one minute past the time mother has set for dinner. Especially not when she makes one of her simply fabulous and out-of-this-world super souffles!" Carmice exclaimed, linking arms with her cousin and starting down the hallway, her voice warm with affection and love.

The family was waiting in the dining room as the pair descended the stairs. Maria's reproofing eyes spoke what her voice refrained from doing. Carmice, ignoring the visible (if not verbal) rebuke, introduced Colin and Maria to Abigail, exclaiming brightly, "At last I have a sister!"

Ian's soft laughter, seeming to come from deep inside him, filled the room with its pleasant notes. Then he said, "Have you forgotten that I have acquired a sister also? She's mine, too."

"But you already had a sister, Ian," Carmice countered pleasantly. "I, unfortunately, did not." And the beautiful young woman laughed softly as she patted her brother's arm affectionately.

"Whatever would you have done without me," Ian exclaimed.

"I couldn't have made it. Positively and absolutely, could not have!" Again there was soft, pleasant, light-hearted laughter. Then Matthew Templeton said, "We have kept Maria's food waiting six minutes longer than usual; now, let us eat."

Drawing a chair out for Abigail and seating her, he said quietly, "Your place around our table, little niece."

It was said with such warmth and sincerity that Abigail felt tears of thankfulness fill her eyes. Carmice, seated next to her, reached over and squeezed her fingers gently.

When all were seated around the elegant dining table, Matthew spoke again. Looking at his family, he said, "Today we begin doing something new and different. Abigail, will you offer thanks, please?" Bowing her head, Abigail prayed.

"A bit archaic, wouldn't you say, Mr. Templeton?" Colin said when Abigail had finished praying.

"Something valuable, lost and forgotten Almost entirely by the multitudes today," came the quick reply from the head of the house.

Looking at Abigail, Colin addressed her with, "I think you should remember that you are in a home of culture and wealth now, a home of socially prominent people. You should conform accordingly. Your name -- Abigail -- it's too old-fashioned. What is your middle name?"

Abigail's throat constricted in a knot. "It... it's Naomi," she replied in a small-sounding voice. "I like my name," she added.

"Ever since Carmice told me you were coming here to live, I have thought about your name. A change would be good for you -- something more fitting to your young years. Abigail and Naomi sound too . . . too heavy, too old for you."

" 'Abbey's' cute sounding," Ian put in quickly. "In fact, I've already called her that, Colin."

"Too heavy. Too heavy and old. They're Bible names. We want something more modern, more today. In my study of names, I've picked..."

"Please, Colin," Abigail interrupted. "My name is Abigail Naomi Jorgenssen. I will never be anything else My name is a special gift from my loving and wonderful God-fearing parents. It has significance and meaning. I couldn't -- wouldn't have it changed. Not ever!

"That's ridiculous. Absolutely ridiculous!" Colin exploded. "You are too young to be so influenced by . . . by..."

Blushing a rosy-pink, Carmice interrupted Colin's sentence by stating that he was a professor in the University and that was the reason he felt so strongly about his opinions.

"She shall always be called Abigail Naomi Jorgenssen," Matthew announced with a suddenness and firmness that astonished even his closest family members.

Colin bristled, then settled down to concentrating on the food before him, his entire attitude and bearing one of hostility and abhorrence toward Abigail.

Abigail knew that although her name meant "my father's joy," and Naomi meant "pleasant," she was not a thing of joy to this ill-mannered, ill-humored young man. Neither would the relationship be pleasant -- not if Colin had his way. A sudden fear seemed to lay hold of her.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Chapter 4

The months that followed were pleasant ones for Abigail who, by her gentle manner and kindly ways, won the entire household over. Neither her uncle nor her aunt forced her into a society in whose ways and culture she was totally unfamiliar and with which her deeply spiritual inner nature was at variance. She gained the respect of the family. Even Ian, after his initial remarks about partying on the day of her arrival, never again mentioned the subject nor anything related to it. Carmice, from the first, accepted her as she was: "A beloved sister, modestly attired, quaintly old-fashioned, and beautiful without and within."

Colin alone presented a problem. His bitterness toward her was all too obvious. He resented her presence, not trying in the least to conceal the fact, and making cutting, snide remarks to her when out of earshot of the family members.

Sitting on a beautiful white metal bench in the garden, reading a letter from Betsy one sunny afternoon weeks later, Abigail was startled by a hand coming roughly down upon her shoulder. Turning, she looked up into Colin's face. His eyes were cold and calculating; the blue in them looked icy, like a glacier, she thought, shivering with fright and a strange kind of fear.

She never did trust him and frequently wondered what had attracted Carmice to the man. Not that he wasn't handsome; he was. In fact, he was strikingly good-looking, and the two made an outstanding appearance when together... Carmice, with her unusually beautiful face, flawless complexion and shiny, honey-blond hair; Colin, with his classic Greek nose, square jaw, handsome face and jet-black hair. But there was

something sinister about him, something intangible but dark. Very dark. Each time she was near him, Abigail" was conscious of the tender Spirit's warning to beware.

She stood quickly to her feet now, folding Betsy's welcome letter and clutching it lovingly to her heart. "What do you want?" she asked bravely, concealing the fear she felt in her heart by her words that came out steady and unwaveringly. "Shouldn't you be at work?" she questioned.

"That's none of your business, you little troublemaker!" Colin replied angrily. "I've come to see you, to tell you that I despise the ground you walk on."

His fingers dug deep into Abigail's slender Shoulders. She winced with pain and tried to free herself from his grasp but found it impossible to do so.

"Please, Colin, let me go! You're hurting me!" she exclaimed, shrugging her shoulders, hoping to loosen the grasp of his hands.

A slap across her cheek almost sent Abigail to the ground. Cringing with fright and with pain, she begged, "Leave me alone, Colin! Please! What have I done to make you feel like you do toward me? Oh, please, don't! You're hurting me!" she cried as he slapped her a second time.

"Good. Very good! I'll hurt you a lot more before I'm through with you, little Puritan miss! It's too bad you aren't living at my house; I guarantee you'd have had that coming out party when you turned sixteen! And you'd have had that mop of hair down off your head, too, and it cut and done up in the latest fashion. Your uncle and aunt are soft. Soft! I suppose you pride yourself in the fact that they have knuckled down to you and are giving up their old friends and their former way of living just to please you!"

"Oh, Colin, I have said nothing to them about giving up their friends. It must be God who is dealing with them."

"God! Don't mention the name! Not ever again in my presence. I don't believe in God!"

Abigail gasped. Looking her persecutor in the eye, she said quickly, "But that doesn't change nor alter the fact that there is a God. Not one bit. My Bible says that some day 'He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh.' Yes, Colin, God 'will laugh at your calamity;' He will 'mock when your fear cometh.' "

With lightning speed, Colin twisted Abigail's arm, throwing her to the ground. "I'm a karate expert," he boasted, watching her writhe in pain and laughing in apparent delight and glee. "Someday you religious fanatics will be put in your place. I'm going to help to do it!"

It was a threat. Abigail buried her face in the cool, good earth and wept silently. "Colin. Colin Perrine! Whatever are you doing?" Abigail lifted her head and her pain-filled eyes toward the sound of the voice. "Carmice!" she exclaimed. "Oh, Carmice, I'm so glad you came! God sent you. Please, can you make Colin let go of me? He's hurting me."

Carmice took the situation in at a single glance. Then in a voice like Abigail had never heard her employ before, she demanded, "Get your hands off my cousin, Colin, and never harm her again! We've all warned you about interfering with her beliefs. We wouldn't want her to change -- not ever. She's helping our home and..."

"And I guess it's nothing to you," Colin retorted angrily, stepping away from Abigail and facing his fiancée, "that she is changing you! You'd rather spend time with her than with me) and the places we once attended are no longer exciting to you."

Helping Abigail to her feet and pulling her lovingly to her side, Carmice, with eyes blazing and cheeks scarlet, said commandingly, "Go, Colin, and never come back. I am seeing you now for the man you really are. Leave; this minute! I will never marry you. Never! Any man who treats a lovely and wonderful girl like you have done to Abigail is a poor risk for a happy marriage. Good-day, Colin," Carmice said icily and with utter finality as she led Abigail down the garden path toward the house.

Once inside the house, Carmice took her cousin to the nearest bathroom and bathed her swollen, handmarked cheeks with cold compresses, stroking her hair back off her forehead and murmuring softly, tenderly, "Oh you poor, dear, sweet child! He hurt you. I'm so sorry, Abigail. But he'll never harm you again. Never! I forbid him to come to the house. Ever! Mother and Daddy will be happy; so will Ian. They weren't keen on Colin. Said they never trusted him."

"But you . . . you . . . were engaged to be married, Carmice! You love him."

"Hush, Abbey dear. It's better to have a broken heart now, before the wedding vows are said, than after we've been married. For all my folks' worldliness and irreligious behavior, they have always taught me that marriage is for keeps -- for life. And life would be a long, long time to spend with a God-hating, woman-hitting man, my dear. If Colin is like this now, what do you suppose he'd be like after we were married!"

"I guess, in the words of my mother, I can say you have good sense, Carmice. Yes, good, common sense. And God is going to make it up to you somewhere down life's road. When you get saved, you will then see how God had His hand upon you and your life, and you will be so very happy and thankful that your loving and kind heavenly Father allowed you to get a brief glimpse into the heart and life of the real Colin Perrine. Oh, I love you, Carmice -- you and all the family. You have all been so very good to me. I love being here at Daffodil Hill, even though there aren't any sweeping vistas of blooming flowers as my mind envisioned when I learned that this was to be my new home."

"You haven't been here in early spring, Abigail. Just be patient and wait; you'll see a sight such as you have never seen in all of your life. The hillsides are literally carpeted with beautiful yellow and yellow-white flowers. That is how our place got its name. Father tells how, when he was a small boy, people for miles around would come to view the spectacle and to gather armfuls of flowers and take them home. I suppose you know that your dear mother once lived upon this very hill? Not in this house, of course, but in the big, rambling house father tore down so he could build the present one in which we live."

"Mother often told me about Daffodil Hill, Carmice. She said the hill looked like it was 'moving' in the spring by dancing, waving, frolicking flowers. I thought perhaps, though, that these were here only during her growing-up years. Time brings about such radical changes for some of us," Abigail added with a catch in her voice.

Carmice, sensitive and quick to catch the meaning of the words, put her arms around her cousin and drew her to her. "You have had a great loss, Abigail, but I guess losing and gaining is a part of living, dear."

Abigail looked up into her cousin's face; tears were shimmering in Carmice's clear, blue eyes. In an instant, her arms encircled the other's neck. "I guess each of us knows the pain and the sorrow of losing someone we love," she said softly as their tears fell and mingled. "But it's so much easier to bear when one has the Lord living in his heart, Carmice dear."

"I'm sure you're right, Abigail," Carmice said brokenly, excusing herself as she dropped the wet washcloth and fled out of the room.

When her cousin failed to show up for the evening meal, Abigail, immediately after she had finished eating, hurried upstairs. Aunt Marielle had said Carmice wasn't hungry and didn't want to eat. She knew why.

With a bleeding heart, Abigail knocked softly on her cousin's door. A faint voice within beckoned her to enter. Carmice, sitting at the window looking out, raised startled eyes, haggard and tearful.

"I missed you at dinner," Abigail said, hurrying to where her cousin sat. "In fact, we all missed you, Carmice. May I bring a tray to your room -- some of Maria's perfectly prepared vegetables and a slice of her delicious roast beef?"

Carmice smiled tremulously "I'm having a battle with myself, Abigail. I hadn't realized what a solemn thing a wedding is, nor how sacred the promises and the vows, nor how binding. Not until today. I know I did the right thing when I told Colin to never come back. But I love him, Abbey. Or do I? I've begun to wonder, sitting here alone with just me and my thought, do I really love Colin? We're so different, he and I -- our sense

of values, I mean. Deep down, I believe in all the things you stand for, but Colin believes in nothing. He's atheistic to the very core of him."

Kneeling beside her cousin's chair, tears trickling down her cheeks, Abigail listened.

"All my life, I've tried to live right," Carmice said in an almost toneless voice. "I dated other boys, of course, until Colin marched into my life and literally swept me off my feet. But from the beginning my heart warned me to stay away from him." Turning quickly to face Abigail, she asked, "Do you believe this is possible? Me being warned, I mean? After all, I'm not a Christian..."

Abigail, speaking earnestly, replied, "Of course, I believe you, Carmice. God has built.., or put . . . this special something inside of you as a protection for you. I guess we all have it there; only, some fail to pay any attention to it when the warning bell rings and the red light flashes."

Looking utterly dejected, Carmice said, "I wish I had heeded that first warning. I'd never have gotten engaged to Colin. I don't think it's any credit to one to break an engagement"

"In your case, it is, Carmice. Oh, it is! It is! It was ,God who gave you the courage to do what you did today."

"Thanks, Abbey. Just pray for me, will you?" Would she! Slowly but surely, God was moving, and He was answering her prayers as well as those of her parents.

When Abigail went upstairs to bed that night, she lingered for a moment at her cousin's door. Inside, muffled but heart-breaking, she heard the sound of sobbing. Not even a cousin could comfort that grief, she mused in prayerful silence.

Putting a hand to her heart, aching with the pain of losing, . . . a pain which she herself knew so well . . she prayed as she stole silently away to her own bedroom.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Chapter 5

Late into the night, Abigail prayed and wept for the wonderful family with whom God had sent her to live. Her burden was especially heavy for Carmice who, of her own volition, had broken off all relationship with her fiance. She was brokenhearted, Abigail knew, for love was not something one could turn off or on like a faucet. Would her cousin maintain her position toward Colin tomorrow? the young woman wondered now. Would Carmice stand firm and unmoved when night shades were pulled upward and the sun

peeked its golden head over the rim of the eastern horizon, or would she recant and go begging Colin for forgiveness?

The uncertainty of her myriad questions caused Abigail to agonize the harder for her cousin, who now seemed as close and as dear to her as any real sister could have been, and when, late in the night, she crawled between the silky-soft sheets, she had the divine assurance that her prayers were heard.

A gentile tap, tap, tapping on her door brought her partially out of the deep, sound sleep into which she had fallen. Thinking it was the wind tapping a branch against one of the windows below, she rolled over. Then she heard it again, louder this time, and more insistent.

Sitting quickly up in bed and reaching for her dressing gown, she called, "Who's there?"

The door opened slightly and in a moment Carmice stepped into the room. "Oh, Abigail," she cried, "I'm so miserable! Forgive me for disturbing your sleep, but I must have help. Today, when I gave Colin his 'walking papers,' the very last thing that has been holding me back and keeping me from God was relinquished. I've been praying, Abbey. Praying, trying to find God and peace. But I don't seem to be getting anywhere. Will you pray for me? Please? I've tried the world and the things in the world, alongside of what you possess and enjoy, my pleasures seem like ashes and... and like so much rubbish or... or junk. You are showing us all that there is another side to life, a better, richer, far more satisfying way. I've wrestled and wrestled with my feelings and with my heart, and I've made up my mind that I want to get on the same road you're traveling on. I want to know Jesus like you know Him, Abbey. I'll be the odd-ball of this closely-knit family, but I don't mind."

"Oh, Carmice I'm so happy! So very happy!" Abigail replied.

"Let me say this also; then I want you to pray for me. I've been scared of Colin. Sometimes it seems like he is trying to possess my mind. It's frightening, believe me. Terribly so. Oh, Abbey," Carmice cried, grabbing hold of her cousin's arm and clinging frantically to it, "I... I believe Colin's demon possessed. He has a strange power, an evil power really, about him. I... I'm afraid of him and... and what he may do to me. And to you."

The last phrase was little more than a whispered anguished cry, but Abigail caught the impact of its full meaning.

"He . . . he hates you!" Carmice confessed quickly and emphatically. "You are a threat to his beliefs..., where I enter into the picture..., and to his plans for our future together."

"Beliefs? Why, Carmice dear, he doesn't believe anything. About God and His existence, I mean. At least that is what I have gathered from his various conversations."

"Right, he doesn't believe in God and His existence. 'I cannot accept your cousin's theological beliefs,' he told me recently when I defended you and something which you had said to all of us around the dinner table. 'Sin. Judgment.' he said angrily, adding, 'Next you will speak of a sacrifice for sin, like that religious fanatic who has come to live at your house.'

"I told him that I believed wholly and fully in a sacrifice for sin, Jesus, the Lamb of God, that you had shown it to me in the Bible and that it was so whether he believed it or not. He became violent, like a wild man almost. We had a heated argument. He declared that, from all his much studying and learning and looking into the matter, the only rational outlook, as he viewed our present world, was to consider the nations, the peoples of the world, as brothers. He feels we need to 'rebuild mankind.' "

"Rebuild, Carmice dear? Jesus said He'd make any and all who came to Him new. From within! How does Colin propose to 'rebuild' a man?"

"By giving him a new environment. 'Put him into a new setting, remove the old temptations, and you will see the re-creation of the man,' he said stoutly and emphatically. He's a firm believer in this, Abigail."

A smile tugged at the corners of Abigail's mouth. "But what about the man's desires, Carmice?" she asked suddenly. "Did he say anything about that, dear? You see, one can take a pig out of his environment -- the dirty hog-pen -- and put him in the finest, cleanest, most beautiful surroundings, but the desire to wallow in the muck and mud and mire has never left the pig. And just as quickly as occasion arises and the mud is available, the pig will do the thing he loves most to do . . . wallow in the mud and the filth. It's because his natural desire is to do this. I Corinthians 2:14 puts it better than I can say it, I guess."

"What do you mean? What does it say, Abbey? I'm beginning to see and believe that the Bible has an answer for everything."

Abigail's eyes misted over with tears. "It does!" she cried joyously. "Oh, it does, Carmice! And in this case it says, 'But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' "

Carmice gesticulated with her hands. "That's it!" she exclaimed. "That's Colin's whole problem; his 'natural man' just doesn't want to receive the things of the Spirit of God. And they are foolishness to him. He thinks you are some sort of... of kook . . . his word for you. But I think you're.., well, a... an angel, I guess. Sometimes, I wonder if you really and truly aren't one. A real angel, I mean. Oh Abbey, I want to be like you. I do. I

do! I'm happy on the outside but so restless on the inside. You seem always to be so at peace with yourself and with everybody around you."

Laying a hand gently upon her cousin's shoulder, Abbey said softly, "That's because my heart is at peace with God. And now He is waiting to come into your heart, too, to make you happy and give you peace and rest. ' "

"And I'm ready for Him to take over," came the quick and immediate reply as Carmice dropped on her knees in prayer.

Coming home from school on a blue and gold October day, Abigail saw Carmice coming down the long driveway to meet her. Since her conversion that night in the bedroom and her subsequent sanctification, the two became more closely knit than ever, the common bond of divine love being the binding factor.

Carmice was a picture of beauty, Abigail thought, seeing her in her now-modest attire. It matched the inner heart change of the cousin perfectly, making her look saintly. She paused beneath a drooping tree which rattled copper penny leaves. The autumn wind fanned wisps of hair across her eyes. "A letter for you, Abbey dear," she called merrily. "A letter from your desert friend, Betsy. And it's a fat one, too."

Abigail laughed, moving quickly forward in a setting of blue and white sky studded with gold leaf stars. "How wonderful!" she exclaimed joyously, taking the proffered letter and hugging it closely to her breast. "Betsy's the dearest, sweetest girl one can ever find. She's genuine, Carmice, through and through. No veneer about her, and nothing shallow either. Oh, I do hope you'll soon be able to meet her."

"She must be like my own sweet Abigail!" Carmice exclaimed, linking her arm through her cousin's.

"Why not read it now!" Abigail said. "Right here? Maybe Betsy has something important to say," and she opened the letter and began reading.

"I know how very much you look forward to receiving her letters, Abbey, and that's the reason why I brought it to you. It seems unusually large, doesn't it?"

"It does, but I'm glad. I love hearing from Betsy. And say, Carmice, I never mentioned him to you, but Betsy's brother David should be graduated from Bible School by now. Perhaps he's bringing her here. He told me before I left that he'd see to it that Betsy and I had a reunion after he'd finished his schooling. Oh, I hope it's so!"

"But that's a long, long way from here, Abbey dear. Don't build your hopes too high."

"Distance means nothing to David when he makes a promise," Abbey said. "Oh Carmice, I want you to know him. David's such a wonderful young man, all full of truth and righteousness and uprightness. He's not at all like Colin."

Lifting a restraining hand, Carmice said, "Please! Don't mention Colin. I want to forget him completely. Did I tell you that father had an injunction issued against him, forbidding him to come near our premises and me? He threatened me not long ago." Abigail gasped.

"He threatened you, too. He accuses you for changing me and my way of thinking and of living. But if he only knew!" Carmice exclaimed happily. "God used you, to be sure; but it was God who did the changing and the transforming. And," she continued joyously, "I see signs of change in my father and mother. Ian also. They're going to get saved, Abbey. I prayed clear through for them. Colin? I wish I could say the same for him, but I can't. He's hard as a rock and just as cold, too. I've prayed and prayed for him -- for his salvation -- and I feel all dead while I'm trying to get through for him -- like I'm praying against a stone wall. Not that I'd ever want him back if he did get saved; I wouldn't. Not ever! But I believe he has sealed his heart against truth and light and holiness."

"That's a fearful thing to do!" Abigail exclaimed, shivering with fright. "Many have sealed their doom by doing that very thing, my father used to say. But listen to this, Carmice! They're coming! They're coming! David and Betsy are actually and truly coming to see me. Oh, I'm so happy I believe I'll burst. Imagine!"

"When, Abbey? When?"

"The 20th of October, Betsy says. Why, Carmice dear, that's next week! Imagine! Now you'll get to meet Betsy and David," and Abigail hugged her cousin for pure joy.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Chapter 6

Two days before Betsy and David's arrival, Abigail went to her Aunt. "Please, Aunt Marielle," she asked, "may Betsy room with me? I know she'd feel a great deal more comfortable if she could. And we'll have so very many things to discuss and talk about that we'll never get it all finished before she leaves unless she stays in the room with me."

Marielle Templeton laughed pleasantly; then, putting an arm around Abigail's slender shoulders, she said, "Why, of course, your friend Betsy may stay in your room. I once was young, too, Abbey, and I remember how excited I was when my mother allowed one of my cousins to spend the night with me. Oh, we had such a good time together. And this Betsy must be quite a wonderful person."

"Just wait; you'll see how wonderful! Betsy's a saint. She really is."

Tears shimmered in the Aunt's eyes. "If she's anything like you, Abbey dear," Marielle replied suddenly, "she is indeed a saint! Sit down," she said softly, "I have a confession to make."

Obediently Abigail seated herself beside her aunt on the enormous and expensive sofa in the cozy family room, wondering what to expect, but sure that whatever it may be, it was all within God's timing and would work out for His glory and the good of all concerned.

Marielle reached over and found Abigail's hand. Lifting it to her lips, she kissed it. Then, between stuttering and stammering, she said, "I feel wretched, dear Abbey. Wretched! And so very vile. You see, when you first came here and took your stand so sweetly but decidedly for God's Word and for your convictions, I was going to force you to do what we wanted you to do... force you to fall into our outlined pattern and social mold for you. I would have done it, too, had your uncle not intervened and told me I dare not do it; I must not! He said, knowing your mother like he did, that this would only serve to drive you more to the Word and to God and would, ultimately, be an even greater convincing factor of the rightness of your belief and your way of living. Feeling -- and knowing-that his temporizing and his philosophizing was correct, I decided to use a totally different approach; we would cater to your every whim where your religious beliefs were concerned, and we would make life easy for you. So very easy and pleasant, in fact, that you would not find it necessary to pray as much nor as often, and you would, in time, see that non-Christians could live together under one roof just as sweetly and harmoniously as your Christian parents and you had lived. Your uncle liked my idea so well that we made a sort of unwritten agreement between us that this is what we would do. We felt confident that you would fall prey to the way of easy living which we afforded you and that you would slowly but surely see things our way. But you didn't, and you haven't. And when I heard you praying just recently in your room again, asking God to keep you stirred and alive on the inside and not to let you settle down to complacency and unconcern amid this life of luxury and ease and beauty, with no opposition and rebuttal from us, well, something inside me crumbled and tottered and fell."

Abigail caressed the older woman's hand. Stealthy, joyful tears bounced off her full, round cheeks and dropped into her lap where they wet her dress and mingled with the many others that followed. She hadn't known of the scheme, not by verbal confirmation it was true, but the One Who had promised to "guide (her) into all truth" had long since alerted her of the enemy's strategy and of the impending doom and danger -- the pitfall -- should she succumb and fall prey to the scheme. It had served to make her more cautious and more diligent than ever, driving her more and more to the guiding Word and her closet of prayer, thus fortifying her against the subtle, shrewdly-laid plans and designs of her arch-enemy, Satan.

"I have been a worldly woman, Abbey," Marielle confessed brokenly. "All my life, I have been extremely and exceedingly worldly. Nothing mattered to me so long as I had the applause of the crowd, the smile of the world. Your uncle, when I first met him at a fashionable eating place, appealed to me and attracted me instantly to him because of his strikingly handsome features and his ability to make every female head turn. I fell in love with him that first night, and he says the same about me. Ours was a short courtship and when, five months after we met, we were married, I was the happiest woman on earth. Matthew treated me like a queen and, woman like, I reveled in his attention and his love. One thing alone nettled me about him, and that was his lack of mingling with my crowd -- my set. I wanted him to become socially popular and prestigious like I was -- like my parents and family were.

"Little by little, and with shrewd and cunning subtlety, I won him over to seeing these things my way, and soon we were an integral part of the social crowd -- my crowd. Once again, my name, with a Mrs. prefixing it now, appeared in the paper's social column, Our picture, as well. How proud I was of this, and how very handsome I thought Matthew looked in his tuxedo and bow tie. Yes, we were a busy family.

Abbey -- busy with a perpetual round of social engagements and commitments -- until you came. You upset our every plan and shattered our carefully laid scheme of making you our latest, most beautiful little social charmer. I envisioned you as the most beautiful debutante photographed for the year in our well-read city newspaper. I also saw you as becoming a star of ballet. Carmice has never been interested in ballet, refusing to take any instruction or lessons for such. So you can see why I was so shaken and disappointed when you came here bringing a set of old-fashioned, out-dated and totally disconcerting ideals with you. Your sweet but firmly consistent refusal to be thrust into my pre-planned mold for you was something else for me. Believe me! You wounded my pride terribly, Abigail, although I never let you know. I did begin to watch you, my dear, more carefully and closely than ever, and I even eaves-dropped at your door when you were praying. That was the final straw. I realized for the first time in my life that there was and is something more to life than a constant round of social activities and engagements. My heart admits its deep longing. Yes, even, its need! I want to have it satisfied . . . in Christ, my dear, dear Abbey. Now! Carmice has found this peace and soul-rest and now I, too, want it."

Trembling under conviction, Marielle dropped to her knees beside the sofa. Abigail, weeping both for joy and over her aunt's lost condition, found it easy to pray as, kneeling, her fervent pleas and prayers mingled with the equally fervent ones of her relation.

Carmice, hearing the loud praying, made her way into the room and joined her voice with others. And when her mother struck victory and prayed through to a clear-cut experience of salvation, the three had a time of shouting and rejoicing. It was much like she had seen and been used to in her father's circuit of churches, Abigail thought joyously.

Kneeling by her window that night, watching the new slice of moon slide in and out of gray clouds that scudded carelessly across the heavens, Abigail began to see a part of the reason why God had her move in with her uncle and aunt. Two souls were soundly converted; two were still outside the fold. One -- Carmice -- was sanctified wholly, and she was sure her aunt wouldn't be long in seeking for and obtaining the blessing of entire sanctification either. Oh, she had so many experiences to share with Betsy when she arrived, she thought, offering heartfelt thanks to her heavenly Father for saving her dear aunt then crawling between the silky-soft sheets on her bed, counting the hours until David and Betsy would arrive.

It was a grand reunion when the pair finally arrived. David, Abigail noticed, still possessed his dancing, laughing eyes and captivating smile, and Betsy, if anything, was prettier than ever, the love of the Lord shining through and through her being, just like her brother.

In no time at all, it seemed, the two guests attached themselves to the heartstrings of their host and hostess and their family. Matthew Templeton found David an interesting and intelligent young man, whose deep love and devotion to God stirred chords long since thought dead and recalled memories of such poignant beauty and deep longing as to make him sick with yearning and longing.

Sighing heavily one evening after a long discussion with David in his private library, Matthew said, "You make me long for my earlier life, David."

"Earlier life, Mr. Templeton? How's that?"

"Yes, my earlier life; and please, if you will, just call me Matthew."

"I'll try to remember; but my parents brought Betsy and me up to always address our elders as Mister or Mrs. However, I'll try to remember your request and grant it. Now, back to your 'earlier life.' What is so significant about it, Matthew?"

Without preamble or pretext, and with a sob tearing his manly frame, Matthew said quickly, candidly, "I was a Christian then! A real Christian. But I strayed. I left Him. He didn't do the leaving; it was I."

"Would you like to come back?"

"Would !! My heart has been longing for the peace and the rest I once knew as a young man before my parents died. Would I? You ask. Oh, I do! I do want to get back to God."

"And He wants to take you back and restore the joy of his salvation to your soul."

"Then what am I waiting for? Let us pray, David. Please!"

A voice from the doorway interrupted the two. "Please, Father, David, include me in this prayer meeting." It was Ian. "The womenfolk all seem so happy since Abbey pointed them to Jesus; and now you, David . . . well, I see that salvation isn't for women only: you are a real man . . . nothing sissy about you. I'm ready to change and turn my life over to this Jesus who has brought such a beautiful and radical transformation into my sister's heart and life. And my mother's, as well. Haven't I watched those two and seen the difference in their lives? Pray for me too, David; I'm a sinner needing forgiveness . . ."

Gathered around the piano that night, with faces shining and radiating the love of God, the house rang with the sound of hymns for the first time ever in its history. This was "biblical household salvation," Abigail whispered joyfully into Betsy's ear.

The days sped by all too fast and when the four weeks vacation was over and David and Betsy had to take their leave, it was a time of sadness indeed. The Templetons, however, promised Abigail a month's visit to her friends' home; but first, Betsy's parents were to come in for Christmas, bringing Betsy and David with them, of course. David and Carmice, who had become deeply interested in each other, pledged to write faithfully.

Winter arrived on frosty-white feet, bringing with it the usual amounts of snow and ice, and by the time the last snow drift had melted down to a dirty trickle on the sidewalk and the first crocus and snowdrop were blooming, Carmice made an important announcement . . . David by her side: wedding bells were in the air.

The hillside was carpeted in color a month later . . . daffodil ladies dressed in their best buttercup-yellow bonnets, dancing and swaying with the warm spring breeze. Abigail, from her position inside the living room, waiting for the signal to lead the wedding procession to the flower-covered hill, gasped in awe at the spectacle beyond the door. Never had she seen anything so spectacular and magnificent.

"Ready, Abbey dear?" It was Carmice.

Spinning around, Abigail looked at her cousin, dressed in her beautiful, modest-looking wedding gown. "You look like a saint!" she commented, kissing Carmice.

"And all because of you, dearest cousin."

"Not I; God, Carmice.' Oh, but I'm going to miss you when you're gone! You're my sister."

"When you're through school, Abbey, you must come and help David and me in our church. You're super with children, and you have such a lovely voice for singing, too.

You know, dear, if I didn't know I was in the will of God, I'd be scared stiff at becoming a pastor's wife. But, strange as it may sound, I'm not; I'm excited about it. And to think, at last I'll be doing something for my Lord."

"You're going to make a wonderful preacher's wife, Carmice, and you'll love the people out there. Imagine it; you'll be taking over father's circuit! Your uncle's former charges! Oh, I'm so happy. Oops, there's my cue; I must go. I love you, Carmice."

"And I love you, too, Abbey dear. Now run along; Betsy's waiting to step out from the side entrance and follow you . . ."

The little procession, beautifully but simply adorned in a way becoming to Christians, stood among the lovely daffodils while vows were said and taken and Abigail, looking out over the sea of swaying, waving, golden-bonneted flowers, was sure there was never a more beautiful nor sacredly-sweet wedding than the one that took place on Daffodil Hill.

\* \* \* \* \*

THE END