Ginger Boone tucked the last wisp of honey-blonde hair into the bun on her head. Running her forefinger gently over her freckled nose she made a face at herself in the mirror then carefully slipped the palest of pale green dresses over her shoulders. Standing back slightly, she surveyed herself in the full-length mirror that was mounted to the back of the bedroom door.

"Um-m. Nice!" she complimented aloud, taking in the slight figure, the new pumps and the fact that the green in the dress accentuated and brought out the hint of green in her eyes.

She pirouetted gingerly. Then, facing the mirror once more, she smiled at the reflection before her. The reflection smiled back. "Um-m. Nice!" she exclaimed again, wrinkling her nose ever so slightly., the way Talmadge like for her to wrinkle it. "Makes you look cute," he'd told her once at church camp. "Sort of innocent looking and . . . and helpless."

Ginger studied the image in the mirror. Helpless? Well, where Talmadge was concerned she guessed that was a good way to look., helpless. Even if she didn't feel helpless. Talmadge was so special. Yes, so very special. He was no viking, to be sure. But Talmadge Littiger was outstanding indeed. Flaxen tousled hair, tall with sloping muscles, not too tan; but not looking like a flounder fillet either. He was lithe, full of compassion and understanding and perfectly wonderful to be around.
Ginger sprayed a favorite cologne behind her ears and rubbed some on her wrists, feeling suddenly nervous and panicky. Suppose Gramps came out of his room and got Talmadge off in a corner and made him hsten to his carpentry tales! Horrors!

She turned away from the dresser and looked out the window to the road. No Talmadge. She sighed with relief, hoping that her parents had told Gramps to read in the quiet privacy of his cheerful room.

Talmadge may never come back, she thought sadly, if Gramps approached him with his carpenter's exploits, et cetera, et cetera. He had bored Ronald Cramms stiff and literally scared him to shivers. Ronald never again asked to come and see her, Ginger recalled with a sigh of remorse. Ronald was such a nice fellow. Good looking, too. Strikingly handsome really. Then there was Victor Dockett. Gramps cornered him about his vocation almost before he'd had time to say "I'm pleased to meet you" to the family. And Victor, who had been the school's most-likely-to-succeed young man, had never darkened their living room doorway again. He all but shunned her at school now.

Ginger swallowed, remembering. Heat flashes washed over her cheeks the way she'd seen heat waves dancing up from the hot sidewalk after a gentle shower had spattered the sizzling pavement. (Or were they heat vapors?) At any rate, her cheeks felt suddenly very hot and flushed at the thought of an interruption from Gramps again.

Tears went careening down her lovely cheeks. Sudden, unbidden and unannounced, they were. She felt ashamed of herself, of her attitude. She loved Gramps; yes, she did. Passionately so. And she was all excitement and eagerness when her father had announced to the family one day at the evening meal that his father would be "spending the remainder of his days" with them. He would become a member of their household--literally and physically--by living with them.

Ginger's tears fell fast now. Gramps was such a wonderful person. And he was so very lonely since Gram died--less than a year ago. They had always been so devoted to each other. It was dreadfully hard on her grandfather, she knew, this separation. But then she had a right to happiness, too, she reasoned quickly. Hadn't Gramps courted and won Gram? Of course he had, or they would not have married.

Oh, if only dear Gramps could realize how deeply he embarrassed her by his continual "barging in" when her male friends came to see her. If Patty's grandfather did such a thing, Patty would arrange to meet her dates elsewhere, Ginger knew. But Patty's parents and her parents were two different sets of parents, the young blonde thought pensively and seriously. And, in her heart, Ginger was glad and thankful that her parents insisted that they meet and get to know each and every one of the boys whom she dated. There was security in this kind of set up. Security and safety... for her.
She sat on the edge of the bed and thought about Patty and her many dates. (Patty was a classmate in highschool.) As each of the girl's dates paraded before her mind, question marks, almost as tall as the boys themselves, arose before Ginger.

She shivered ever so slightly as one boy in particular came before her. Why Patty ever dated him was beyond her comprehension. He was wild and bold and daring, with a reputation that matched his character. But Patty had a mind of her own, and her parents did precious little if anything to change her mind. They were of the "do your own thing" group. And too bad for Patty, too.

Now take her father and mother and Gramps, she soliloquized, deep in comparison...

The gentle tinkling of the doorbell made Ginger jump. Her thoughts changed completely now; Talmadge had arrived. Quickly she stood to her feet. "Oh God," she cried softly, "please keep Gramps in his room. And... and... if he does come out, don't let him get on his carpentry business, God. Please. Please!"

With one last glimpse at herself in the mirror, Ginger hurried from her room, realizing with a sickening sort of feeling that she had no faith whatever. In the first place, she was selfish, and God didn't put His approval upon a selfish individual. And secondly, she was ashamed of Gramps. He was so... so very ordinary and... and old-fashioned. What would Talmadge think of him? Yes, what would he think of her very plain, super-religious and totally old-fashioned grandfather?

She paused midway down the stair steps, dreading meeting Talmadge's eyes. What if he detected her shame and her fears? She had never been good at concealing her emotions and her feelings, she realized with renewed alarm.

Turning quickly, she started up the stairs again. Her mother, seeing her retreating figure, called loudly, "Talmadge is here, Ginger. Hurry down."

"Ye... yes, Mother," she replied, between a choking sensation somewhere inside her esophagus or epiglottis, one.

Feeling like she had lead in her shoes, she turned about-face and walked slowly down the stairs.

Talmadge saw her. His eyes sparkled with joy. "Ginger!" he exclaimed with delight, coming toward her. "Oh, but it's good to see you! It's been such a long time since campmeeting..."

His sentence trailed meaningfully.
All the fear she'd felt vanished with his words. Ginger's eyes grew wide with wonder and awe. Talmadge was even more handsome than she had remembered him from camp.

"It's so good to see you!" she said quickly, forgetting all about dear Gramps and his vocation.

The look on her father's and mother's face was answer enough as to whether or not they approved of Talmadge. He was clean-cut. Through and through, clean cut, looking and acting the part of a genuinely converted and entirely sanctified young man from the inside out.

A dagger of conviction stabbed Ginger's heart. She wished her inner life would be equal to his. He was totally and completely unpretentious. Transparent, too. Genuine!

"I've arranged for us to go to a youth rally with another couple," Talmadge said, bringing her quickly out of her deep thoughts to the immediate present. "I hope you don't mind. Pete and Joan are a fine pair, so sane and down to earth and deeply spiritual, too."

Ginger smiled up into his face. "That's fine with me, Talmadge. Wasn't Joan at camp? I met a Joan Somers."

"Then you'll not be strangers. That's the one and only Joan Somers. A most unusual girl and . . ." 

"Well, well, well!" Gramps exclaimed, coming out of his room toward Talmadge with hands outstretched in warm, friendly greeting. "You must be the young man my special granddaughter talks so much about. I'm sure pleased to meet you. Talmadge Littiger, is it? I knew a Hiram Littiger from across the ridge where Ella and I used to live. Ella was my wife of fifty-two wonderful years," he added by way of explanation.

Ginger cringed. She felt her composure sneak away and crawl into a tight little shell deep inside her being. Here it goes, she thought miserably, listening and watching as Gramps began a lengthy monolog on the art of carpentry, the beauties of carpentry and the convenience of being a carpenter. His A, B, C's of carpentry, she had mentally labeled them... the Art, the Beauties, the Convenience.

She felt her stomach do a quick roller-coaster slide and wished the floor would open up so she could do a not-too-obvious disappearing act and be spared the terrible agony and embarrassment of a Ronald Cramm-Victor Dockett repeat performance.

"Excuse me a minute," Talmadge said softly-kind close to her ear, "while your grandfather shows me his collection of carpenter's tools. I promise, God willing, we'll make it in plenty of time for that youth rally, Ginger."
Ginger felt something not-righteous boil up within her. A few minutes, did Talmadge say? Well, he was in for a rude awakening. A total shock. Gramps was exhaustless on the subject of his life-long work.

As soon as the door to the basement shut softly behind the two, Ginger fled up the stairs, trembling all over. She was angry, she realized with sudden alarm. Very angry with Gramps.

"Doest thou well to be angry?" a Voice asked her from the sky.

"Bu . . . but Lord," she remonstrated brokenly, "I thought I asked You to . . . to keep Gramps in his room . . . ."

"Doest thou well to be angry?" Again, the Voice. Startled more than she had ever been, Ginger fell to her knees. "No, Lord. No!" she cried. "I don't do well to be angry. In fact, I'm miserable and wretched, and.., and angry. And... and I want freedom from this horrible thing that's inside me. I'm full of pride, too, Lord. Forgive me for prancing in front of the mirror with a haughty and lifted-up heart and spirit. Oh-h!" she moaned, burying her face into a throw pillow on the bed. "I'm so carnal, Lord. So very carnal. Forgive me for being angry with Gramps, and do take out this deadly thing inside my heart..."

Ginger, forgetting about the basement and the carpenter's tools, prayed on, until she knew the carnal nature was dead. Crucified and totally eradicated.

Her eyes were shining as she hurried down the stairs.

Talmade saw her and smiled. "You look as if you just made contact with Heaven," he said with reverence and joy.

"I did, Talmadge. Oh, I did! Gramps," Ginger said, throwing her arms around the aged man and sobbing into his work shirt, "I want you to forgive me. I was angry with you for.., for..."

"Why Ginger dear, you know you're forgiven . . . for whatever it is or was. You got sanctified, honey, didn't you?"

Laughing through her tears, the granddaughter exclaimed joyously and victoriously, "I did, Gramps! I did! Oh, I love you so!" she added, drawing the lined cheeks down to her level and caressing them fondly and affectionately. "Thanks for living everything you profess to have," she added softly.

Talmadge brought her back to the fact that he was still there with a sincere, "Praise the Lord!"
"Oh, Talmadge," Ginger said quickly, "Gramps is the most wonderful grandfather in the world."

"He’s that, I'm convinced, Ginger. Never have I enjoyed a time more than that which I just spent with him in the basement. I love carpentry. Love it! Your grandfather and I have worked out a little plan and a schedule where I'll be able to learn from him, the Lord willing. I know a couple more fellows who are interested in this as a vocation. So it looks like you'll be seeing a lot of me, God willing," Talmadge said, looking down at Ginger's smiling face.

"You... you mean you... weren't bored?" she asked brightly. "And... and is Gramps going to become a teacher of skills?"

"Bored!" It was Talmadge’s turn to look shocked. "Oh never! I plan, if the Lord spares me, to spend hours of valuable learning under your grandfather’s careful teaching and super know-how. He has all the tools we'll need to work with, plus, he has the time to teach a whole class of us."

Ginger sighed happily. "Gramps, you're really very, very wonderful!" she said softly.

"And if we hurry," Talmadge said, "We'll still have plenty of time to make it to that meeting, Ginger. Care to join us?" he asked Gramps.

"No thanks, Son," Gramps answered quickly. "I'm getting too old to stay out much past quarter till ten. Eleven o'clock's too late for me any more. Have a good time," he added brightly. "A spiritual time."

"It will be that!" Talmadge promised. "The speaker’s both spiritual and Spirit-filled, and the trio who are singing are the same."

Kissing Ginger on the end of her nose, Mrs. Boone said softly, "We'll have refreshments for you when you get home, honey. Have a good time in the Lord. See you later, Talmadge."

Ginger sighed happily and contentedly. What a rich heritage she had... parents who loved her, who were spiritual, who waited up for her, and were concerned so much about her happiness as to insist upon meeting her dates! Oh, it was a great feeling, this feeling of knowing one's parents cared.Again she sighed.

"Happy?" Talmadge asked with emotion.

"Very, very happy," came the quick reply.
THE END