Chip Craig stood at the summit of the low-flung hill and surveyed his surroundings with a critical eye. Was it worth it? he wondered bitterly, feeling all the old hatred and malice wash over him like a gigantic wave that sought to smother and inundate him.

Kicking a loose stone at his feet, he sent it careening down the hill. He heard it land in the copse of birch and white ash and smiled derisively.

The small farming community at the eastern edge of Penobscot County had always been a pastoral village. His father grew up there; his father before him, too. They loved it; he loved it. Always did and always would. It would be his home for so long as he lived. He knew this. From infancy, it had been a foregone conclusion. His love for the land and its people, coupled with the atmosphere of wholesomeness and freedom, had ever served as a binding force to hold him there. Only once did he leave the peaceful community. That was the time when he went away to the Maritime Academy at Castine and returned with his degree in engineering.

Though he could choose from the good-paying jobs awaiting him after graduation, he decided instead to develop a small, backwoods Maine industry. Thus, it was that he spent the summer after his graduation literally sweating it out in the summer sun. He had just returned from a year at sea, and his natural trait to investigate and learn got the
better of him. What better industry to develop than the manufacture of charcoal in the
nearby lumber milling region, he'd decided with a feeling of satisfaction.

There had been days and weeks and months of hard labor, upraised eyebrows of
well-meaning friends, and many a "Tut, tut, Chip, you've lost your marbles for sure!" But
he'd plodded on, a lone figure in a sea of seeming doubtful friends, a lone figure with grit
and grim determination and a dream.

And his untiring efforts had paid off. From one kiln, he gradually progressed to
two, then four, six and finally ten, all converted from huge scrap underground tanks and
giant culvert-like cylinders. The kilns resembled smoking "sputniks," with the thick white
smoke oozing from their many stovepipes which were aimed skyward and their uniform
air vent holes around the base.

Chip sent another stone careening down the hillside, his anger no less abated.
Then, clenching his fists, he started down the hill toward the pickup truck that stood
waiting for him along the side of a makeshift road.

"Brooding again?" a voice asked from the scrub underbrush.

Chip jerked, startled. He hadn't seen Ed that morning. Ed Home helped him with
the work.

Stepping from the underbrush, Ed said father-like, "You'll get an ulcer sure
enough, and cancer in your soul, Chip."

Chip felt a barbed retort on the end of his tongue but he choked it back. Ed was
too good a man for sharp words. Furthermore, the man couldn't help it that his daughter
had given him--Chip--the "slip." No, Ed had nothing to do whatever with Barbara's
decision to break up with him.

"Something eating you again?" Ed's words were direct and short.

In a tone of voice kinder and sorer than he felt, Chip said, "It's never stopped
'eating' me, Ed. You know that. I never will. I love Barbara. Why do you suppose I had
that house built on Birch Knob?"

Ed dug the tip of his heavy work shoe into the soft dirt. When he lifted his head,
tears shimmered in his sky-blue eyes. "I'm sorry, Chip," he said softly. "Sorry. But
Barbara's decision is Bible-based."

"Is going with Justin Starnes Bible-based, too?" Chip asked heatedly, turning and
striding quickly to the waiting truck and driving away, the anger boiling in his heart like
water in an over-heated pot.
He accelerated heavier than usual, feeling as if something within him was about to explode. How much longer he could go on, knowing Barbara was dating Justin, he didn't know. Like his surroundings, Barbara had been an integral part of his life. They had grown up together, wading the icy-cold stream that gurgled its crystal-clear way along the bottom of Birch Knob when each was a child, playing church on their parents' front porches in summer, and sharing a multiplicity of cherished childhood secrets. So far as he was concerned, Barbara was the only girl for him. He had seemed to know this from his high school days. She had felt it, too. And now . . .

Chip accelerated heavily. The dust along the make-shift road billowed up around the speeding truck and powdered the bushes and grass with a heavy coat of red-brown grit. Clutching the steering wheel tightly, the knuckles of his fists showing white from pressure, he stared ahead, trying to decide what to do. Should he pull stakes, sell the thriving little business and the lovely home on Birch Knob and leave the peaceful surroundings of Penobscot County? he wondered angrily and morosely. And if he did, where would he go? Would he be happy anywhere else? What about a living; would he want to go through all the anxiety again and back-breaking work he'd gone through to get his charcoal business off to a paying proposition? Would it be worth the many months of sweat and scrimping and scraping again?

Deep in depressing thought, he drove furiously. The stop sign loomed up before him but he had no time to stop; instead, he accelerated more heavily. And good that he did. By a matter of mere inches, the speeding semi and his truck missed.

For once in his life, Chip was frightened. So frightened in fact, that he trembled violently. Steering the pickup to the side of the road, he brought it to an abrupt halt and jumped out. His legs felt weak and rubbery, like they wouldn't hold him up. Beads of perspiration formed on his forehead and ran down his sun-tanned cheeks. That had been a close call. Yes, an extremely close brush with death. Too close for comfort really, he thought, his throat and mouth feeling dry and parched and his heart pounding like a sledge hammer inside his chest.

Chip leaned against the truck, supporting himself while his badly-frightened and hammering heart gradually settled down to normal beating. Then he ran his shaking hand across the undented metal and sighed a long, deep sigh of relief. He could well have been killed and the truck totally demolished . . . not to mention the fact that the driver of the semi may also have been a statistic. And why? Because of his deep-seated and all-consuming anger and bitterness.

At thought of his narrow escape, Chip's legs nearly crumbled beneath him. A wave of nausea washed over him, rendering him faint and weak and pale. Were Barbara here, she'd have told him it was God's way of warning him, of trying to speak to him before possible doom struck or judgment fell.
At thought of Barbara, the young man's anger boiled over again. It was she who was responsible for the near accident, he thought accusingly. If she hadn't jilted him, things would not have gone the way they had gone and were going. What was it she had told him that night when she broke off with him? Something about not being joined to, and with, an unbeliever. That was it. Yes, in essence, that's what she had said.

Recalling that night with painful reality, Chip exclaimed aloud, "Well, Barbara, if that's how you feel, so be it! I've never been an unbeliever, as such. But neither can I see this running to church every time the doors are opened. I can't!" he added, pounding a fist into the open palm of his other, his mind all the while racing back to the night when Barbara was soundly converted.

She was changed all right; so much so that she had him in a "straight jacket" of do's and don'ts. Oh, she hadn't told him to do certain things or not to do them. But her entire person and outlook on life had been so radically changed and altered that the mere shadow of her dainty, petite self had smitten him to the heart and he had begun changing, too. After all, he wanted nothing more than to please her and to make her happy.

That's why he had gone forward that Sunday morning and "accepted" her Saviour. He hadn't felt any different, to be sure, and he couldn't say (truthfully) that he knew he had passed from death unto life, like Barbara had so frequently testified to knowing. No, he couldn't say any of that. But there had been a slight degree of consolation in the fact that he'd gone forward. And he'd tried to live the way she was living. Yes, he had tried. Hard, too. But for some reason, it just wasn't as easy for him as it was for Barbara. Maybe it was because he was a man, he theorized, walking around the bed of the pickup truck.

Her words hit him hard then. (Hadn't he told her weeks ago that it was because of his masculinity that he wasn't able to "grow" proportionately--to her!) "Some of the greatest saints on earth have been men, Chip," she had stated softly and kindly. "In fact, the Old and New Testaments are replete with the accounts of holy, God-fearing men. No, being a man has nothing whatever to do with your problem. You just haven't struck the Rock; that's what's wrong."

"Now wait a minute!" he had remonstrated hotly. "The Bible has something to say about not judging."

"True," she had replied. "But it also states that we'd know a tree by its fruit. You've been fighting and opposing sanctification, Chip... this glorious heart-cleansing and infilling of the Holy Spirit... which I know is real in my soul. That is why I said what I did. No one who is truly born again fights against that which God says he needs. This is why I must break off my relationship with you. I feel, since it is all too obvious and apparent that you have no intentions of taking this way, that I'll grieve God away unless I
do. I feel sorry for you, Chip. Sorry!" she had exclaimed, brushing tears from her eyes and rushing away.

The painfulness and shock of it washed over him now like a giant wave. If only he could forget! he thought miserably, sliding behind the steering wheel and driving away.

A shiny new car stood in the driveway of his rustic log cabin-style home when he drove the pickup down the lane. Chip recognized it as Gordon Hardee's. Gordon was one of his best friends--a banker of no mean standing in the adjacent town and a man with an eye single to one thing--making and keeping his friends happy and content. It was Gordon who encouraged him in the kiln business when all others were discouraging him and telling him it couldn't be done. Gordon, too, who told him he'd better "land Barbara while the landing's good," adding that she'd make "any man a perfect wife and helpmeet."

"Barbara!" Chip exclaimed in disgust, almost hating himself for the way her name was always mixed up with practically everything he thought and did.

He drew the pickup alongside Gordon's car and cut the motor. Then he jumped out. "And what brings you here?" he asked, smiling broadly as he hurried around to his friend's new sports car.

Gordon, stepping out of the sleek model and looking for the world like he had just come from a men's fashion show, slapped Chip on the shoulder and exclaimed, "I've been waiting a long time for you. You still a working man?"

Running his hands across the shiny surface of the car, Chip grinned broadly. "You know the answer to that question," he answered lightly. "Guess I'll always be a working man. So long as I'm able, that is."

Gordon studied Chip with quiet, unfathomable scrutiny for a long while. Then, like a thunderbolt out of a clear sky, he asked, "You happy, Chip?"

The question, so poignant and sudden, so totally unexpected, caught Chip off guard. With eyes brimming with tears and a catch in his voice, he replied hoarsely, "Do you really need an answer, Gordon? Can't you see the torture in my eyes? Isn't that answer enough?"

Pulling a pen out of his pocket and toying with it unconsciously, Gordon apologized profusely. "Sorry, Chip; I honestly am. Forgive me for asking. I had hoped that by now some of the pain and hurt would have been healed." Then, on a brighter note, the young banker continued, "What I'm here for is about a little resort in Maine. It belongs to my wife's one uncle and aunt."

Chip dug the toe of his shoe into the gravel on the driveway, listening intently.
"They're a super-nice couple, Chip. Too old, though, for running the resort anymore. They wrote Nicole and asked her if I knew of a dependable young man--or a young couple--who may be interested in taking it over. Not to buy it--I don't mean that--but to run it for them. Manage it, is the better word, I guess. Both Nicole and I thought of you immediately. You wouldn't be getting the world with gold on a platter, but $1,000.00 monthly isn't bad. Not when everything's paid for and you eat at the resort's dining room and get three or four rooms free."

Chip folded his arms and stared at the ground. "We feel you're cut out for the assignment," Gordon insisted in his quiet way. "And it would help you to forget some things."

"Impossible, Gordon. Impossible! To forget, I mean."

"Perhaps not fully and entirely, but to a degree it would. The lake and the woods would serve as healing therapy for you. It's nothing fancy or classy; so don't begin conjuring up visions of a towering, monstrous, medieval classic, nor of a modern Sheraton-Hilton. It's neither. Not in the "in-between" class even. Just a two-storied old New England home built for durability and the comforts of its era. I guess, with its cellar considered a separate floor and entity of the quaint but lovely house, one would be safe in saying that it's got three stories to it instead of the two, which I previously stated. Interested?"

"Let me think about it, Gordon."

"No need worrying about the place on Birch Knob," Gordon said quickly. "I have a young man in desperate need of a house. He's getting married next month and wants to rent something nice for his bride to live in. So that's no problem. Neither is this," the banker declared, pointing to the house before him. "A niece and nephew of mine will rent it now if you give them the clear. They're dying for the peace and quiet of the countryside. Help any?" he probed gently seeing the lines in Chip's brow soften considerably.

"It helps, Gordon. But I still want time to think it over, to toss it every-which-way in my brain. I'm not one for hasty decisions and judgments. Never have been. You know that."

"Good enough," the banker answered, sliding behind the steering wheel and handing his friend a card. "The name and address of the people and the place," he said, before driving away.

Chip stood in the bright sunshine, staring thoughtfully at the address in his hand.

* * * * * * *
CHAPTER 2

The transition from his native soil to the resort-hotel was made in record time. Once Chip had driven to the resort and seen it, he was instantly impressed and decided to accept the offer presented to him by his close friend, Gordon Hardee, successful financier and shrewdly-wise business man and banker.

By island standards—for the resort was located on an island—it was not small. Two miles long, slightly more than a mile deep. It lay in the blue ocean waters twelve miles from the mainland, all of which had a tremendously satisfying effect upon Chip who now wanted nothing more than to lose himself. The farther away from the outside world he could get..., the world which had dealt him such hard, cruel blows... the happier he would be, he decided, glancing through one of the long, narrow windows in the house to the lighthouse rock with its slender, white, glass-headed tower, lying just off the harbor.

The island was wooded with pines, firs, maple and spruce. It was rich with the vines of wild currant and grape, its air sharp with the salt sea wind, sweet with the tang of bayberry and sweet fern. To the landward side, at the cove moorings, lay the weathered craft of the island fishermen--dieseldriven trawlers with seine boats alongside, powerful lobster smacks unafraid of rocks or surf. And, in the summer, as now, the high-riding, sweetly and carefully groomed craft of visitors. Here, the jutting wharf, the trim white houses of the fishermen and their wives and families, the wide-verandahed Inn, as the resort was called. To seaward were the massive mica-glinting rocks that calmly and uncomplainingly shouldered back the Atlantic.

Except for sailing, the island hadn't a single feature to make it attractive as a resort. No golf, no theater, no honky-tonks, no nothing. To Chip Craig it was an ideal place... a place in which to lose himself..., his identity..., and a place to be healed.

Since the island offered no amusements... unless one wished to call the icy-cold sparkling Maine waters an amusement for swimming..., it was annually resorted to by people who couldn't stand resorts; people whose tolerance for amusement-oriented, jazz and rock-banging resorts, had reached a minus-zero mark--an all-time low. So The Inn prospered. Opened on the first of May and closing at the end of October, The Inn, for most of the season, hired college boys and girls to help with the varied jobs. They waited on tables, bell-hopped, helped in the kitchen, toted luggage and tended the gardens. For this, they received a small salary and a summer on the island. A few, confused and bewildered by the lack of entertainment and amusement, left. Most came back if they could. The island had a bell-voiced lure that quickly and easily survived the separation and the lack of din and noise.

Standing before the window now, the house and kitchen crews all busy at work, Chip sighed with satisfaction. It was almost overwhelming the way things worked out and fell into place once he decided to manage The Inn, he soliloquized pensively. The house
on Birch Knob had been rented to a super-nice young man--a Dan Keeley from Gordon's
home town. Dan had brought his prospective bride over to meet their new landlord and
Chip's eagle eye immediately noticed the carefulness and neatness of her person. The
new house was in good hands, he knew. Good hands, and a new bride.

The thought of the bride part made him feel like he was suffocating. "Barbara!
Barbara!" he whispered painfully to the wind that scurried through the open window and
tugged ever so slightly at the tied-back ruffled muslin curtains.

Taking quick, long strides, he hurried to the verandah, a leather jacket shielding
him from the strong southerly wind. He must try to forget, He must! He had too many
things for which to be thankful and grateful. Too many new blessings to begin counting:
his rustic house was rented by Gordon's niece and nephew at a good price; he was
receiving one thousand dollars monthly for his expertise and know-how of The Inn's
management; the Dunnefords, Homer and Dora... owners of The Inn... were unusually
kind and gracious in getting him perfectly oriented and off to a head-start in the transition.
Yes, he must forget; this was a new way of life for him--a new beginning.

Leaning over a railing surrounding the verandah, Chip looked ahead. The ocean
swelled and slid and sparkled; the red buoys swayed and rang. Dories swung at the
moorings, but the fishing boats were out. Down on the wharf, Herbert Mallott mended his
nets, his weathered fingers agile as a woman's tatting or crocheting. The kree of the
gulls ran overhead, and from the kitchen side of The Inn came the familiar morning clatter
and complaints of chickens scratching and scurrying for food.

Chip inhaled a breath that for pure expression of peace probably had no equal
anywhere. He loved water. Nothing quite like its softly-lapping sounds for relaxing. And
forgetting.

A call from the kitchen sent him scurrying inside. The building was old, with large,
wide rooms, few windows, pale pickled pine walls, all of which blended regally with the
outside surroundings and bore an air of total congruity to each other. Each belonged just
as it was. One to the other. To the left of the lobby was the main dining room, unused so
early in the season, and the small dining room where the scattering of guests who had
already arrived took their meals. To the right, was the parlor, or "sitting room." Despite
the scarcity of windows, it was a bright room, with hooked and braided rugs on the soft
wood floors, chintzes that managed to look cheerful despite their years of wear,
hurricane lamps and a boat in a bottle on the mantel. The furniture was pine and curly
maple, belonging as much in the room as the room itself.

"Mister Craig. Mr. Craig..."

"Coming, Mrs. Gorman."
Chip smiled as he entered the kitchen. Mrs. Gorman, chief and only cook, turned from the great stainless steel sink and looked at him. She had been supervising the preparation of vegetables by two tanned girls in denim skirts and white blouses. No one would ever have taken for a cook the woman who now advanced, a lean gray column, upon Chip. She was single-minded on the topic of food. "I need some clams," she said, getting immediately to the point of her urgent call. "And I can't spare any of the help here to go after them. Do you suppose...?"

Chip, following her train of thought, said solicitously, "But of course I'll go, Mrs. Gorman."

"Thank you, Mr. Craig," she replied, turning back to the work at hand. Then just as quickly, she spun around. "I will be needing a roast for Sunday's dinner. As you know, the Vagabond comes only three times a week. I was wondering..."

Chip's mouth turned at the corners. He smiled broadly. "Are you trying to tell me you want me to go to the mainland and grocery shop for you, Mrs. Gorman?"

"Well, now, Mr. Craig, you know I'd do it if I could. But there's no way I can manage it all. Not with those new guests coming to The Inn tomorrow." She sighed tiredly. "I do hope I get a bit more help here."

"By the week's end, there should be at least four more young people in to help," Chip informed the cook. "And, of course, I'll make the trip to the grocery store for you. Make out the list. But mind you... I'm giving ample warning beforehand., don't scold if I don't bring home the kind of roast you'd have chosen and selected."

"A crown roast, Mr. Craig. Crown roast," she announced in a voice freighted with triumph. "It must have a fine fatty graining, delicate fat, no gristle, and that touch of darkening about the rim that means it has hung decently."

"Quite an order for a novice to fill, don't you think so?"

"Nonsense, Mr. Craig. I've not known you to be a novice at anything you do. Besides, I'll be praying for God to help you to make the right selection. Don't be fooled by any of the butcher's tricks; you make the final selection. Now here's the list of things I'll need," she added, reaching into her apron pocket and handing Chip a piece of paper.

Chip thanked the cook for both her compliment and the list; then he turned to leave. The kitchen, like the entire house, bore unmistakable signs of its lovely antiquity...high-backed benches, brown, narrow wallboards, iron range, antique sideboard and dry sink. The only modern thing in the great kitchen was the startlingly new steel sinks.

Chip hurried outside, thinking about Mrs. Gorman's words. Not that it was the first time she'd told him she would be praying for him. It was not. Shortly after his arrival, she
said, "I'm praying for you, Mr. Craig. You're carrying a burden which Jesus wants to carry but which you're afraid to turn over to him. Yes, I'm praying for you. Jesus not only wants to be your Saviour, but He's waiting to be your friend and your burden-bearer as well."

Walking in silence now down the narrow, dusty path to Herbert Mallott's house, his footsteps muffled on the earthy road, Chip had plenty of time to think. Somewhere, the sound of an axe against a tree rang with the calls of the gulls and the chug of an early-returning boat. Here and there voices lifted, rose and fell as he passed. Sweetfern and tangles of unripened blackberries, daisies of linen whiteness and rich black-eyed Susans sprang at the roadside and paraded over the meadow grasses. On he walked.

He turned, finally, at a tree-lined driveway that slanted steeply downward and was overgrown with weeds and studded with rocks. Beside it, almost at the water's edge, was a square white house, so like the many other houses. Beyond that, and below, a shingled fishing shack with the inevitable hill of lobster pots, netless and sunning.

He knocked on the screened back door of the house.

"'Mornin' Mr. Craig..." a small woman emerged out of the shadows of the house. She wiped her hands on a brightly-colored percale apron, opened the door and beckoned Chip inside.

"Thanks, Mrs. Mallott," he said politely. "But I can't linger today . . . orders from the kitchen." He laughed. Mrs. Mallott laughed with him.

"Seriously, Mrs. Gorman needs some clams." "Clams, does she? Well, Herbert'll have them for sure. Come," she said, leading the way down the wild driveway to the fishing shack where her husband sat on a wooden bench, fastening bricks to the bottoms of his lath pots. Like gourds against the shingled walls hung his glistening, newly-painted, blue and yellow buoys. A pair of long dory oars leaned against the door, and the dory itself, partly beached a few feet below them, was fastened by a painter to an iron hoop on the wall.

"Herbert, Mr. Craig's come a runnin' after some clams for Mrs. Gorman."

Herbert, tall, stooped slightly, with a brown, weather-tanned face etched deeply in wrinkles, looked up at his wife and Chip. "Clams, does she?" He echoed his wife's question of a few minutes ago. "Well, if clam's she's a needin', it's clams she'll be havin'," he declared, getting quickly to his feet and hurrying away after the cook's order and returning a short time later with a covered wooden bucket. "Here you are!" he said triumphantly. "Freshest clams anywhere. Tell Mrs. Gorman a hearty 'God bless you' fer us, Mr. Craig."
"Why not just call me Chip, Mr. Mallott?" Herbert looked at Chip, studying him long and hard. Then, as if finally accepting him completely, he stuck out his hand. "OK. From today on, it'll be Chip. But only if you call me Herbert and Morn, there, Flossie."

"Will do," Chip promised, starting for The Inn and picking up the bucket, which was both heavy and damp and smelled strongly of fish and brine.

When he was far removed from the fisherman's house, Chip exclaimed aloud to no one in particular, "And to think that I thought I was getting away from religious people! First, Mrs. Gorman, now Herbert! I guess it's useless and futile to try running from God; He has His 'salt' and 'candies' scattered all over the world."

A sudden longing to talk to Ed Home took possession of him. But, no, he must change his thinking. He had work to do, another lengthy "errand" to run for Mrs. Gorman, who was quickly becoming the mother image to him, his own mother having died when he was far too small and too young to remember her even.

Shifting the heavy wooden bucket to his other hand, Chip hurried up the path.

* * * * * *

CHAPTER 3

The Vagabond, a small well-kept steamer which carried mail and passengers to the island three times a week, rolled up to the dock with short gasping toots just as Chip reached the landing. He watched as the men secured the small craft fore and aft to the wharf piers and listened to the bits of news being flung back and forth between mainlanders Rowl and Kerree and islanders, Sanford Frisbaine, Mel Butterbe and Herbert Mallott.

Rowland tossed a canvas sack of mail to the ground just as the mail truck dashed dustily downhill to the wharf.

"No need to be in such a great hurry," Rowland said to Steve, the mailman, "Nobody's going anywhere. You islanders have an easy life. Yes, an easy, lazy life."

Sanford, Mel and Herbert exchanged glances and smiles; then Herbert said, "Care to trade places with one of us, Rowland? For jest a couple days?"

Rowland, laughing and slapping Herbert on his broad shoulders, said, "I was only teasing. No, thank you. I wouldn't care to trade places with any of you. Hard, heavy work, is lobstering and fishing."

"It builds muscle," Sanford countered factually. Rowland, agreeing, tossed the islanders' mail sack on to the steamer; then, making a bit more conversation with the
men, he said, "Well, Mr. Craig, I think we'd better set sail. You were going to the mainland, I take it?"


"Then we'd best set sail, young man. By the time I get you back here, the sun will already be setting far down toward its nightly run. Anchors aweigh!" he shouted lightly as Mel and Steve and Sanford released the hawsers.

Rowland reversed the motor until the Vagabond was clear of the dock; then with two or three kicks ahead set her running out into the open water.

The day was vast, palest blue. The sky too high for clouds, the horizon now so far that it might well have been sky, or sea, or vapor--the curve on the world. Like a horse on a familiar bridle path, the Vagabond nosed along her channel through a sea so gentle that the bell buoys rode voiceless.

Chip, seated on the canvas-covered stem seat, arms wrapped about his up-turned knees, eyes looking far across the water, was deep in thought. God! He was everywhere. Funny thing; he had come here to get away from the very thought of Him, but for some strange and totally unexplainable reason, God was now, more than ever, in his thoughts.

He unlocked the stranglehold on his knees and leaned an arm on the railing, wondering about the feelings of the disciples when Jesus walked on the water. It was not cairn and placid like this was, to be sure, he knew. Rather, it was boisterous and turbulent . . . much like his heart was experiencing deep in its secret chamber.

"You OK, Mr. Craig?" Rowland called above the purring motor.

"Fine, Mr. Kerree. Fine. Just thinking." "You do a lot of that--thinking, I mean." "Guess I do. But then, a thinking man isn't generally getting himself all tangled up in other peoples' business and affairs."

"You scored a point there, Mr. Craig. Yes, you scored a point."

Rowland settled back to his work and Chip watched the water, recalling the year he'd been at sea. He was seeing it all again--the wonder, the swelling, unending blue-glass reach of water with the chipped, white marble crests and the smooth-sloping planes. He sighed, breathing in the wild, slightly sticky, spray-freshened air. And suddenly, God was back in his thoughts again.

Strange thing, Chip temporized, how everything he thought about . . . regardless of what subject or along which line . . . invariably brought him back to God. It was like he
was in a circle and no matter which way he turned, there was God. Try as he may, he would never get away from Him.

Feeling suddenly restless and empty inside his heart, he stood to his feet, stretching and flexing his muscles. Then he inhaled long, deep breaths of the crisp sea air. As though that will help you! his conscience accused.

Feeling wretched and miserable, he sat down once more on the stem seat. Conviction! Could it be that he was under conviction? he wondered.

The deep longing in his soul gave him the answer. He was.

Something within him crumbled then. Like a decayed, rotted board fence, it crumbled. Suddenly Chip wanted to pray. Actually wanted to pray. Longed to, even. Oh, if only he could find a secluded spot. A small nook. A comer even! Anywhere. Anywhere! He must pray. Get the load off his heart.

Something which he’d heard sometime--was it when he’d gone to church with Barbara?--came quickly to mind. "Prayer," the speaker had said, "is a channel of communication between man and his Creator, God the Father, in whom we live and move and have our being."

"Through this communication, we know that something vital enters our lives."

Chip closed his eyes. Why not pray then? he thought. Here, and now! Peter, the apostle, was saved from drowning by crying out, "Lord, save me," wasn't he? And God was no respecter of persons.

The knowledge was faith-inspiring and Chip, from his inmost soul chamber, cried out, "Lord, save me. Be merciful to me a sinner. I'll rectify all the wrongs I've ever done, confess my sins."  

It was so wonderful that Chip could scarcely believe it had happened. He was made new . . . in Christ. For the first time ever in his life, he had music in his heart and joy-bells of salvation were ringing in his soul. Peace, peace! His soul now had peace.

He opened his eyes with the feeling that surely this must be Heaven. But no, it wasn't; the Vagabond continued slicing a path through the blue-green water and Rowland was still at the wheel and he, Chip Craig, was still on planet earth. The change and transformation was all within his soul, deep on the inside of his being. It was glorious and wonderful, this feeling and knowledge that he was at last right with God and ready for Heaven.

"You look like a weight dropped off your shoulders, Mate!" Rowland exclaimed, turning and looking at Chip.
"You're right; it did. Not off my shoulders, but from my heart. I just got saved."

"Saved? From what?"

"Saved from hell's burning flames and forgiven for all the sins I ever committed. My soul's ready for Heaven, Rowland. Is yours?"

Rowland cleared his throat and coughed loudly. "Well, I'll be! I didn't anticipate a sermon, Mr. Craig."

"I didn't know you heard one. You asked me a simple question and I gave you a simple, straightforward answer. Are you ready for Heaven, if you'd die this very minute, Rowland?"

The color drained from Rowland's ruddy cheeks. He looked pale and startled. "I'm as ready as most everyone is, I guess," he answered lamely.

"That's too vague!" Chip exclaimed. "You can know you're ready. I just experienced this a few minutes ago, Rowland. I cried from the depths of my soul, 'Lord, save me,' and God, for Christ's sake, did. I'm a new creature in Christ. I'm free and I'm happy."

"Go back to your thinking, will you?" Rowland put in quickly. "When I get ready for religion, I'll get it my way."

"There isn't but one way, Rowland; that way is Jesus Christ. He said, 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.' Also, it's not religion you need; it's Jesus and His salvation."

"Go back to thinking, OK? Save your sermons for someone else."

"Sorry, Rowland. I didn't mean to become offensive and obnoxious to you. But I'm so happy. I'll be praying for you."

There was no answer to his statement.

Chip fixed his gaze once more upon the beauties around him, noticing how near they were getting to the mainland.

Rowland steered the steamer carefully up to the wharf where trawlers, draggers and powerful schooners were casting forth the bounties of the fishing grounds. Flounder, mackerel, red fish and haddock hauled yesterday from the cool familiar element, dressed and barreled aboard sloping decks, rode off now to the markets. Slow, staggering, olive-green lobsters, still laced with shreds of sea wrack, waved their stalked eyes and lifted heavy pinchers in prayerful attitudes.
Close in, smaller craft rode at moorings.

Toward the harbor exit lay the big ships. The atmosphere shrilled and echoed with whistled rights of way and barked commands loud over the water. Chip thrilled with the excitement of it all, the old sea lure stirring deep within his body.

"Be back in an hour," Rowland almost barked the order when the Vagabond was secured snugly to the wharf piers.

"Thanks," Chip answered. "That should be plenty of time. See you."

It seemed good but strange to set foot on the mainland again. Almost like he was a stranger to this fast-paced life.

As he hurried away, lost among the crowds of people, Chip wondered if the island was weaving an unbroken tie around his heart. He had the feeling that now he would always belong there, especially so since he had found the Lord as a result of coming to the island and having been made acutely aware of God's inescapable presence and being. He had been trailed and tracked down on an island!

The butcher shop was not crowded, much to Chip's delight and satisfaction. As he looked over the many different cuts of meats, he understood why Mrs. Gorman had stated emphatically that hers must be a Crown roast. It was a good thing she knew what to call it--or ask for--Chip decided in his mind; he wouldn't have known.

He gave the grocery list a thorough looking over to see what other meats or dairy products were needed; then he placed his order, stating that he wanted the best crown roast in the butcher shop. "Mrs. Gorman gets it here all the time," Chip added. "It must have a fine fatty graining, delicate fat..."

"No gristle," the butcher interrupted, smiling broadly and warmly into Chip's blue eyes, "and a touch of darkening about the rim that means it has hung decently."

"You've memorized it!" Chip exclaimed. "Verbatim!"

"Verbatim," the butcher answered, beaming proudly. "People are my bread and butter. I always try to please."

Chip nodded understandingly. "The finest roast you have, Sir. Crown roast. Have the meats and cheeses ready for me within a half hour. Mrs. Gorman needs a few staples from the grocer's shelves..."

Shopping in a large supermarket was not at all like shopping at the small comer store in Penobscot County, and Chip found the experience totally and completely
frustrating and upsetting, to say the least. He pushed the monstrosity of a shiny-new
grocery cart up one aisle and down another in search of the listed items but to no avail.
Finally, in utter exasperation and racing a losing battle with time, he hurried to a store
clerk.

"Yes?" Came the question from the mouth of the young woman with the probing
sky-blue eyes.

"May I help you?"

"Please do; I'm lost!"

For a moment, she studied Chip... like he was a small child or in sad need of an
institution. Then, seeing the look of utter frustration..., of urgency..., defined clearly in
every feature of his face, she said, "Lost! What do you mean?"

"Plainly speaking, would you know where the galley was on a ship? or could you
tell me what weathered seamen use to..."

"What are you trying to say?" the girl asked, interrupting the unfinished sentence
and looking totally confused.

"Simply that I'm lost . . . among a sea of cans and boxes and bottles and jars. Here," Chip said, thrusting Mrs. Gorman's list before the eyes of the startled but now
relaxed clerk.

Again, the young woman studied Chip; then she broke out in a hearty laugh. "Now
I understand you," she said, pushing the grocery cart gallantly down the proper aisles
and deftly and knowingly filling the order.

"Thanks. Thanks much," Chip said, relieved, checking his watch and hurrying
through the checkout counter.

A waiting cab outside took him to the butcher shop and, finally, to the wharf where
a prancing, pacing Rowland waited impatiently for him.

"Sure glad God didn't make me a woman!" Chip exclaimed when seated snugly on
the steamer. "Talk about a hassle! That's what I had in that super-big supermarket.
Couldn't find a thing. If I hadn't had the assistance of one of the clerks, I'd never have
made it here on time."

"Might've been a good test of your religion, if you'd have been late and I'd have
just let you sit here waiting," Rowland said with a pronounced barb of sarcasm and hint
of derision registering in his voice.
"What I have is deeper than religion, Rowland. I have Christ in my heart."

With a set jaw, Rowland started the motor and headed away from the wharf, his mind a closed book, his heart hard like steel.

Chip, sitting in the stern seat, bowed his head in prayer.

*     *     *     *     *     *     *

CHAPTER 4

The Vagabond bubbled white in its wake and streamed away, out of the harbor, into the run.

Chip stood up, walked easily through a load of boxes toward Rowland at the wheel.

Rowland, easy hands on the hell, turned at Chip's approach. "Start thinking," he said across his shoulder. "Don't talk. Nothing! I don't care to hear it. I'd a thousand times rather have you to think than to try to mess up my life and my way of living by talking and telling me about..., about..."

"God, Rowland? Is that the word you were afraid to utter?"

Rowland, his hands still on the helm, did a quick about face. "Like you said coming across from the island, Mr. Craig, 'thinking people don't generally get all messed up in other peoples' business and affairs.' So go back go quiet thinking, will you?"

Chip, detecting a far more subdued tone now, said, "All right, friend, if that's what you prefer. But remember one thing, will you... ?"

"That depends . . ."

"Whenever you need help, call on God; He'll be waiting to hear the call."

There was no reply from the cockpit. Nothing. Only a low kind of sniffle. For Chip Craig, this was all the answer he needed. With shoulders tall and straight, he walked back to the stern, breathing a silent but fervent prayer heavenward.

The Vagabond made good time and as they neared the island, Chip sat studying the cove landing, the small harbor and the glittering, snowy lighthouse across the water. He remembered the thrill he'd felt that day when he came to 'inspect' The Inn: the excitement of the Dunnefords, the cool aloofness of these wonderful islanders..., cool only until he'd proven himself worthy of their humble but clean dwellings and of their eastern shore hospitality and friendship. It all came back vividly now to him, and with the
near-landing in sight, he experienced a new thrill of joy... he was home. Yes, home. Literally and in God's fold.

He eased forward on the seat. Along the shore stood the shingled fishing shacks, great piles of round-domed, slatted lobster traps, and square, sturdy houses cleanly and freshly painted white. From the wharf, the broad, dusty road wound upward a few hundred feet then disappeared behind a stand of spruce. The Inn lay directly beyond the curve, on the seaward side of the road. Large, and ringed with the great verandah, it, too, was painted white, making the whole scene glimmer in shards of splintered color. He thought, with a quick sense of near-loss, that he might never have seen this at all, might never have known the quiet tranquility and peace of the far-flung isolated island had God not had a hand in directing when Gordon called upon him that day in Penobscot County.

Rowland eased the steamer into port in no time at all. Chip, hurrying up to the cockpit, pressed a sizable bill into his hand. "That's a tip for you, for having to bring me back to the island," he said. "The check's the fare back. Thanks for being so kind, Rowland."

Herbert Mallott met them at the dock with his rusty old pick-up. "Mrs. Gorman's in a big rush for somethin' or other," he told Chip, laughing. "Sent word downhill fer me to be sure to watch fer you and 'toe' you straightways up to The Inn. Heave ho, Rowland and lend a hand--or a muscle--with them sacks of groceries. My, my, my!" he declared. "Looks like the lady sent you after the store!"

Chip laughed. When he related about his frantic search of the items in the mammoth supermarket, the aging man nearly doubled over with laughter. "Guess I'd be ever bit as bad," he conceded when his laughter subsided. "Flossie an' me are pretty much self-sufficient. Us an' the Lord. We raise all the veg'tables we eat an' the fruit, too. 'Course, we don't have red meat hardly ever. But who needs it when he has all he wants o' sea delicacies an' plenty o' chickens! Well, I guess we're loaded, Chip. Best that we be rollin' uphill, what say?"

"Fine with me, Herbert, and say, Rowland, I sure do appreciate you taking time out for the ride back. I'll be thinking of you and... praying for you." And Chip climbed into the pickup.

As they rattled and chugged uphill, Herbert looked over at Chip. "You're different, Son..."

A warmness settled over Chip. Son! Herbert had called him son. To be a son, one was part of a family unit. This was the man's way of saying, "I like you. I accept you--wholly and fully."

"I said, you're different..." Again Herbert repeated the statement.
With brimming eyes, Chip turned and looked at the driver.

"Thanks, Herbert. Thanks... for calling me son. And yes, I am different. I cried to God for mercy upon my soul on the trip across to the mainland today and God saved me. I can't get over this change in my heart and . . . and in me--my feelings and everything.

"That's all a part of the transformation, Chip," Herbert said with tears streaming down his weathered cheeks.

"Isn't God wonderful!" Chip exclaimed out of an overflowing heart. "I have Him for my Heavenly Father and now you as an earthly father. I've never known the love of a blood father and mother, my parents both having died while I was still too young to remember them--Dad in an accident of some sort and my mother from an illness."

Herbert reached out a hand. "Welcome to the family, Chip," he said warmly and fatherly. "And now, here we are. We'd best be hurryin’. Mrs. Gorman seemed 'most beside herse'f, Fred said, when he told me to meet you."

Deftly, he swung the old pickup around to the kitchen door, hopped out, shouldered a large sack of flour, another sugar, and backed through the screen door.

"H'lo, Mrs. Gorman," he greeted, setting the provisions on a large, scrubbed-pine table. "Looks like you 'most ordered the store today. Come take a look."

"Where's Mr. Craig?" she asked, following Herbert outside but not to "take a look."

She almost collided with Chip who was that very instant advancing toward the kitchen door with arms laden with sacks that rose to heights well above his head.

"I must have a word with you, Mr. Craig," she said, using her most urgent tone of voice as she held the screen door open for him and relieved him of one of the sacks.

"As soon as I help Herbert unload our 'grocery store,' Mrs. Gorman."

With almost assembly line precision, the cook removed and stored the items as they were unloaded on the big pine table. Her slogan, "A place for everything and everything in its place," worked like a secretary's filing cabinet, Chip thought, marveling. Only her "system" was all stored snugly away in her mind, with no drawers to pull out and sort through.

Herbert stood for a while, watching her and eyeing one of the delicate, delicious-looking lemon meringue pies standing, in neat rows on the side board. Then he said, "Well, I'll be takin' my leave, seein' I'm not needed 'round here no more."
With a wide sweep of her arm toward the pies, and still working away on the last of the groceries, Mrs. Gorman said, "Cut a piece, Herbert. I know what you're wanting. Take a piece along for Floss, too. You know where the plates are..."

Herbert, winking at Chip in a mischievously triumphant way, thanked Mrs. Gorman profusely, cut one of the pies, then headed on his merry way homeward.

Wiping her hands on her ample apron when the last thing was put in its place, Mrs. Gorman faced Chip. "A problem," she said in her straight-forward and no-nonsense manner. "No, two problems. First, the Hedley girl's not working out. Or 'in,' I should say. She refuses to cooperate in the kitchen. Anywhere. Next, I refuse to serve steak charred black

Chip sat on the edge of the vast pine table to think.

"Mr. Craig, that's neither sanitary nor polite."

"What do you mean, Mrs. Gorman? What isn't sanitary nor polite?"

"I never allow anyone--not even Mr. Gorman, mind you!--to sit on the table."

"Sorry," Chip said, standing to his feet. "Now, on with your discussion. About Kit Hedley. Have you thought that she may be timid, Mrs. Gorman, and that she may not know how to do cooking? Many girls today don't, you know--know how to cook, I mean."

Mrs. Gorman was silent for a while. Thumping her middle finger on the table top, she said, "I wish it were that simple, Mr. Craig. But it's not. When I tell her to do something, she literally runs from the kitchen."

"Maybe you frighten her. There's always that possibility, vague and faint though it may be. You are quite a... a perfectionist..., so skilled, talented and efficient..., that this may have her scared to try even. I'm sure she would not have been recommended were she not capable. But I'll have a talk with Kit and see what I can do to help the situation, Mrs. Gorman. Cam's working out OK?"

"Camilla's fine. Catches on in no time at all." "Well, I've observed one thing, Mrs. Gorman, and that is that all the students who work here learn home economics from the kitchen standpoint--by you. You're a brilliant teacher; not aware that you're teaching even, I dare say. Mr. Dunneford informed me, when I first came here, that there are dozens and dozens of young people on the waiting list--wanting to come to be under your 'teaching' and supervision. Most of the girls who want this honor and privilege are prospective home-ec. teachers. A former 'student' of yours, a Sandy somebody, collected and recorded materia domestica while she worked here, planning to collate it someday."
Mrs. Gorman was plainly pleased but shocked at the facts. "One never knows who may be following in his or her footsteps, Mr. Craig, does he?" Mrs. Gorman added seriously and thoughtfully. "May the Heavenly Father keep me on the plain path, and the 'straight and narrow.' What a responsibility, leading young men and women!"

"I believe you had a second problem?" Chip remarked. "Something about not burning steaks to a charcoal . . ."

Mrs. Gorman brought herself instantly out of her deeply pensive mood. Pursing her lips like only she could over rash and unreasonable demands, she said quickly, almost in tears, "I'll not serve my steaks burned. Not to anybody. That's a sign of a poor cook. Why anyone would demand such is beyond my sphere of reasoning and understanding. In the first place, its not healthful; secondly, the steak looks unappealing and unappetizing; and worse still, it tastes like it looks . . . burned. Black as charcoal. A good, choice steak, wasted!" She shook her head in disbelief and sheer agony.

Chip studied the agonized face of the cook momentarily. Then he said, "We do serve as ordered, Mrs. Gorman."

"Burned? Never! The man can do that well himself. A still-juicy, nicely-brown, yes; burned? Never!" she persisted. "I can see you won't be much help on this score so I'll take my own way and disguise it as best I can. Try to give it that charcoal-burnt look without being burned to a cinder."

Chip smiled and left the kitchen. Here was a woman who cooked, not alone for the money she earned but for the pride of cooking, the glory and satisfaction of cooking.

He found Kit in the parlor, polishing the tables and shining the bottle on the mantel.

"I know why you're here, Mr. Craig," she said before Chip had a chance to speak. "And I want to learn. Believe me, I do! It's just that . . . well, I get such an insecure feeling around Mrs. Gorman. But I like her; I really do. Admire her enormously, too. Oh, it's all so confusing at times."

By now she was squeezing the polishing cloth into a tight little ball between her hands.

A pathetic-looking creature, Chip decided, actually feeling her nervous frustration. He'd never before related to people in this way and the realization heightened his pulses. This must be a part of his newness in Christ, he thought, remembering that Jesus related to, and felt for, his sufferers, too.

"She . . . she's so skilled," Kit added. "And I . . . I'm so clumsy and . . . and all hands and feet around her. At home, I'm not this way at all, Mr. Craig."
Chip sighed. Seeing tears cascading down her rosy-brown cheeks, he said softly, "Kit, only this afternoon I became personally acquainted with a wonderful Friend. He lives in my heart. Will you allow me to talk to Him about you? He's vitally interested in you and your happiness. His name is Jesus..."

"You mean you... want to pray for me?" "Please."

"If it will help...?" "It will. I promise." "Then do. Oh, please do!"

It was nothing elaborate, this first real prayer since his conversion. But like Mrs. Gorman's "speeches," it was straight to the point, and Chip knew he'd had an audience with God. Kit knew it, too. Feeling stronger and more confident of herself than she'd ever felt in the cook's presence, she hurried away to the kitchen, her face registering a quiet calm and peace.

Chip's soul was full of joy. He had made a beautiful discovery: Just as he had consoled Kit and helped her, so his Heavenly Father was ever ready and omnipresent to help him and to comfort him when he needed it.

Wanting to get alone somewhere to talk to his beloved new-found Heavenly Guest and Divine Friend, Chip stole out of the house and headed for the cemetery.

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CHAPTER 5

By the time Chip took care of a few errands, drawn to his attention by one or the other of the help, the sun was slowly descending in a pink mackerel sky, turning the alabaster white of the lighthouse faintly coral, the still, calm waters rose-red. At her mooring, Herbert's boat rode fragilely buoyant, looking as free for flight as the seagull perched on her spar.

His heart felt a thrill of holy ecstasy wash over it. Free for flight was the gull. Why, his soul was like that--free from the rapture; ready to go. But wait! What had the minister said that night? Something about holiness. That without it no man could see the Lord. It was an absolute necessity, he'd preached, if one expected to get into the Eternal City.

Chip meditated deeply. His heart had a new kind of hunger and desire--a desire to be holy and clean. To be purified. He wanted to go to Heaven. Yes, he did. And by God's grace and help, he'd go there! The fighting and rebelling against his "clean" heart was gone, now that he was saved.

He crossed the road, went over a little gully and up the hillside along a small straight path that was almost not a path at all, more a lane of matted grass, but a lane
that knew where it was going. Ahead, in the dark pine trees, a bird choir sang with awe-inspiring beauty and loveliness. Crickets fiddled somewhere in the grasses and brambles, and cicadas from lofty and carefully-concealed perches added their major to the whole note.

Chip stood, looking around and pausing by the side of the little cemetery where old, simple headstones stood in dark relief against the falling dusk. Quietly and reverently then he entered the city of the silent dead with its plain, uncluttered and unsophisticated lichen-trailed stones, thinking that now since he had met the One Who had conquered death, hell and the grave, it wouldn't be hard to die; the graves were mere resting places in which to house the body of clay until finally the soul and body would be reunited eternally, either for Heaven's blissful City or Hell's everlasting punishment. At thought of the latter, a shiver of horror raced through Chip's being.

He found a tree-shaded family plot and, sitting on the cool grasses among the stones, he opened his Bible and began to read. Above him, gulls screeched and screamed as though trying to chase back the dark. Chip, oblivious to their frenzied cries and shrieks, read on, his heart hungering now for the very experience which he had once opposed and which, he knew without the least shadow of a doubt, Barbara had obtained and possessed.

At thought of Barbara, a pain cut into his heart--pain and jealousy over Justin dating her.

Chip looked off into the distance, thinking. Justin and Barbara. Barbara and Justin. The longer he thought about it, the more jealous he became, and the more jealous he was, the cooler was his ardor and love for his new-found Saviour and Heavenly Friend. He sensed the withdrawing of Jesus... a sort of grieved, slow departing.

"O God, no! No!" he cried aloud, getting on his knees and burying his face in his palms on the good earth. "Please!" he begged. "Don't depart; don't leave me. Forever and ever I want Your presence above anything or anybody. Forgive me for being jealous. O come back, Jesus! Come back, and be Lord of my life . . ."

Like a warm flame springing up in his soul, Chip sensed the Heavenly Guest take His rightful place in his heart once again. With tears of joy rushing from his eyes, he raised his head and praised. Nothing, he realized suddenly, was worth forfeiting God's presence and the accompanying peace which He brought when He arrived to take possession in one's heart.

In an agony of soul now, he prayed earnestly and fervently to be sanctified wholly. He wanted deliverance from the thing--or things--that threatened and destroyed his inner soul rest and peace. It was there, inside his soul, this hateful and wicked destroyer, and it must be reckoned with once and for all time and eternity. It must be removed and
crucified, wholly and entirely. Unless it was, Chip knew he'd be another Peter--denying his Lord. So he prayed on.

Down at the dock, the boats, fastened securely for the night, rode high tide. Along the beach, little wavelets ran up the gray wet sand, slid back flat, leaving laces of foam that winked and blinked quickly and went out before the low wash skittered up. Imperceptibly, the water line on Herbert's dory was lifted, her stem began to swing a little free. Herbert, to bed early as was his custom, heard the gentle "splash, splash, splash" of the rising water against the dory's sides and yawned sleepily and tiredly. Then he thought about Chip and, rolling quickly out of bed, he dropped to his knees in prayer for the "new lamb in God's fold."

At The Inn, Mrs. Gorman, not understanding why, was seized with sudden, deep conviction that she must "pray for Mr. Craig." Turning the lights off in the kitchen, she knelt beside the table.

The battle being waged in the little cemetery was a fierce one, black as the night itself--or blacker, even. A long fog rolled in from the ocean, making it blacker than usual. The pole of the lighthouse swung past in a milky trail, the voice of the foghorn was tremulous and unsolaced, like the cry of a woman at the loss of her child.

Chip, sensing that he was wrestling not against flesh and blood but an enemy of God, pled the Blood, imploring God for total and complete deliverance.

The night wore on. The fog rolled in heavier. A gauzy visibility moved around him. Ahead and behind, the fog, impalpable and thick as sheep's wool, closed in. Still the lone figure prayed on, confessing each carnal trait as it surfaced and was revealed to him. He loathed himself, his foul heart so full of wicked propensities and possibilities.

The first faint streaks of dawn began their feeble effort of trying to penetrate the dense rolling-in fog when Chip prayed clear through and through clear. Divine peace and holy love flooded his fully-cleansed and thoroughly-purged heart with wave upon wave of glory and blessing. There was a total and complete death to self, to be sure. But after the death--the crucifixion--there was a resurrection! Dying was merely the precedent to the glorious "coming alive" again--to the resurrection. Only now he was ready for service, he realized, standing to his feet.

His clothes were moistly-damp from the dense fog. He didn't seem to notice. So happy was he with the abiding Presence of the Comforter that he felt he was walking on a cloud.

Locating and following the little lane that wound its way downward toward The Inn and the wharves, the fog, in streamers of white convolvulus, trailed away, burned out. The day now seemed made of gold and glass. The sun, in burning brilliance, streamed over and into the morning, reaching into the deepest recesses of the dark firs, glittering
on the alabaster sides of the lighthouse and coaxing out the winking fire of mica in the rocks. The sea refracted light from every sloping angle. It was much like his soul, Chip thought, joyously happy. The Son of righteousness had arisen in his soul with healing in His wings, with a heavenly light so brilliantly bright and glorious as to dispel and utterly remove all the gloom and darkness and ugly hideousness of carnality from its lurking place in his heart. He was free. Free! Living, breathing and enjoying the pure sweetness and delights of Canaan's blissful land--of divine love.

Hurrying to his rooms for a quick shower and a change of clothes, Chip discovered that by the time he stepped into The Inn the bulk of the summer guests . . . artists, writers, teachers and exhausted doctors and their wives . . . had already eased out upon the day without clamor, noise or fanfare, dispersing with easel or book to crannies jealously guarded where they would paint or read or write or lie passionately inert, almost daring intrusion. It was the island's passivity, Chip felt, that was a great drawing factor.

Entering the kitchen, Mrs. Gorman eyed him cautiously, surreptitiously.

"Thanks for your prayers," Chip said, making a quick check that all was going smoothly. "I'm brand new on the inside Saved and sanctified wholly."

Mrs. Gorman flung her great arms outward, saying, "Bless the Lord! Bless the Lord! Prayer is the greatest weapon I know of, the strongest and the most powerful." Then, not given to over-much talk-when work needed done especially--she turned and plunged headlong into the task of baking pies.

Chip, checking on the crew of working college students and finding them busy with their various jobs and assignments, hurried away to his small office. Closing the door, he picked up the phone and dialed a number.


There was a little gasp of delight. Then, "Chip! Oh, it's good to hear your voice! We've been praying for you . . ."

"Thanks. Thanks much, Barbara. It's paid off. I called to ask your forgiveness . . . for being jealous of Justin and you. I got saved; and last night . . . this morning early, really... I died out to all of me and I got gloriously sanctified. I'm dead to every part of Chip Craig, to his desires, his ambitions, his wishes, "Dead! Oh, Chip . . ."

"And resurrected, too! I'm alive . . . unto Christ. Just thought I'd better make my restitutions this morning as quickly as possible. I want to keep His presence at any cost. I wish you and Justin the best of everything. No hard feelings on my part; that's an been taken care of by the Holy Ghost."
"Justin. Justin, Chip? We're not dating. Never have. He was helping me with a church project some months back. He's marrying Anna Marie . . ."

The disclosure left Chip speechless. For a long moment, there was total silence on the line. Then he said humbly, "I'm sorry I accused you of that, Barbara. Can you forgive me?"

Her soft laughter, so like a gurgling, laughing stream, thrilled Chip like it always had. "What a foolish question!" she exclaimed. "Of course, I'll forgive you. My heart is full and running over with joy knowing you are saved and sanctified."

Cautiously, eagerly, Chip said, "Does it make any difference, Barbara? In your feelings toward me, I mean?"

"All the difference in the world."

"Then . . . then . . . maybe Ed . . . your father and mother, I mean... and you could come here for a visit, the Lord willing. We could begin over again-aneu. I can't get away. I signed a contract that I'd stay. And truthfully, I doubt that I'll ever leave the island. I've fallen in love with it and its humble, simple-living fishermen and their families."

"Oh, Chip, that sounds wonderful! Dad's been so concerned about you and your soul. Said he really misses you at the business here. Everything's going well, though. But it's not the same with you gone."

"Your dad gets a couple weeks off soon, as I remember..." Chip said quickly. "Why not all three of you pack your bags and spend the time here at The Inn? I'll have rooms for you. Some of the guests will be leaving in a few days. Can't stand the nippy-cold days and nights of the approaching autumn here on the island. And it can get cold..."

"You may as well consider it settled," Barbara replied into the phone. "Dad was planning on looking you up anyway. And, instead of him coming alone, Mother and I'll come, too. Oh, Chip, I'm so anxious to see you now that you're all right with God..."

For a long while after he put the mouthpiece back into the cradle of the phone, Chip sat in silent meditation and pleasant thought. In his happy, peaceful and overflowing heart, he knew that everything was going to be all right. He knew it/ Barbara was as eager to see him as he was to see her. And this time, there would be a wedding--on the island.

A poem, which he'd heard or read somewhere, came suddenly to mind. He found himself quoting it aloud:

"Glorious transformation--
Sins that like scarlet glow.
E’en though they be like crimson,
’They shall be white as snow.’

"Never a word more blessed
Comes to the heart of sin,
Fly to the cleansing fountain
Wash you and make you clean!

"Beautiful type He giveth--
What is so white as snow?
Naught but the sin-stained spirit
Washed in the crimson flow.

"Soon with the saints in glory,
Clad in fair robes of light,
We shall repeat the story,
Jesus hath made us white.”

By the time he finished quoting the words, tears were flowing down his sun-browned cheeks. He was glad for the death of the self life... and the resurrection, too.

* * * * * * * *

THE END