Maggie dragged her rheumatic filled body out of bed and hobbled over to the window. Lifting her eyes to the hills, she began her daily devotion of praise and thanksgiving to God. In spite of the pain gnawing and burning in her joints, she was thankful that once again, she was privileged to live to see another sunrise.

" 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help,' " she quoted softly.
"'My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.'"

She looked toward the hills. There was something so solid, so enduring, so unmoveable about the hills, she reflected. Every way she looked, there were hills on the horizon somewhere. Beautiful, beautiful hills, so much a part of her and her beloved late husband-companion of 49 years.

Her gaze shifted from the hills and mountains to the small town not far from her home. It shimmered in the soft gold of early morning, fringed by the constant green of pines. Ragged mists of violet and gray rose from a nearby creek, pierced by an early sun. The little stream had once been the only barrier between the town and a raging forest fire that burned for several weeks—leaving the mountains blacker than slag. But that had been many years ago and now, like before the fire, the hills and mountain ranges were lush and beautiful with coniferous trees of every variety and description, a veritable paradise and habitat for wild game.

Maggie stood before the partially-opened window, remembering and dreaming, her heart and mind torn between two trends of thought: Should she leave here, as her twin sister suggested, and take up residence in the city in one of the high-rise apartments? "They're lovely, Maggie," her twin, Martha, had told her over the phone. "And there's virtually no work for you to do. Nothing more than keeping your own three rooms tidy and clean." Or should she stay here in the house where Jacob and she had started life out together, the house where all her fondest, sweetest dreams lay stored in every nook and cranny of her memory as well as in the wellbuilt old three-story.

She took a long, deep breath of the early morning air and let it out quick-like, wondering as she did so if she had done the best and wisest thing by allowing Virginia and her husband Stan to move into the house with her. But Virginia had been so insistent about moving in that she had finally consented to the arrangements and the set-up.

"I don't like for you to live alone, Morn," her daughter had declared. "What if you fall down the stair steps and can't get up! You could lay there for hours, days even, and nobody would be here to help you. I really feel it's the only thing for Stan and me to do. You waited on me for almost nineteen years; now it's time I helped to wait on you. It's not far for Stan and me to
drive to work, and I'm sure Andrew won't be any trouble for you. He adores you!"

Maggie smiled at thought of her only grandchild. How Jacob would have loved the pleasant, laughing, ever-busy 4-year-old. He was sheer joy to be around. And such an inquisitive little fellow. In fact, she had nick-named him "The Question Box." But that's how little ones learned, she mused silently now. And oh, how she did love Andrew!

She looked from the small town to the now-deserted one-room schoolhouse below the hill. Here it was that Virginia had gotten her grade school learning . . before the modern school building was erected at the east end of the town.

The old building had come through four decades, but not without scars. The metal flagpole and its clanking, rusty chain conjured up long-faded shouts of children. The maypole, too. She could hear the merry laughter of the happy children and the songs and ditties that made sense to no one but the eager, excited voices of the little ones going 'round and 'round on the homemade maypole, the songs being sung for the pure joy of shouting.

A tear slid from the corner of Maggie's eye. This was all so much a part of her and of her life. She loved living here among the peace-loving citizens of "her" valley. Silent though the old schoolyard was now, still ghosts moved there; out of yesteryear they paraded before her, peering from the vacant windows of the vandalized old structure. First came the tall, thin form of Miss Hayes who taught for almost 40 years in the school. Her work load would have made five average teachers cringe and flee in fear, yet the only help she had was from class monitors--and her unfailing switches.

Miss Hayes was a good woman. Holy and righteous, too. She taught not only reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, history and English, but she taught Bible as well. It was as much a part of her everyday curriculum as were the other subjects.

She had no time for psychology. Her methods were stern, her orders carried out, but her students learned. Their rewards . . . in spelling bees or whatever..., were public--public praise if a child deserved it, public disgrace by switching in front of the classmates if he didn't. They were leg-switchings,
with none above the waist—but they stung like fury and restored order quickly.

Maggie turned from the window, taking with her the memories of a pleasant and beautiful yesteryear, and straightened the bed covers, smoothing out the bottom sheet and pulling the lightweight blanket up till not a wrinkle was seen. Then she carefully and lovingly laid the snowy-white quilt on top and smoothed it gently over the other bed covers and up over the pillows. It was one of her prized possessions. The pattern-design had been of her mother's own making and clever ingenuity but the large quilt had been quilted carefully and painstakingly by Maggie herself—every single stitch in it.

Could she leave all these lovely things behind and just pull up her lifelong roots and be transplanted into a stifling, modern~high-rise apartment in the city? she wondered again. Her heart told her no. Still, she didn't want to add a hardship on her only child and her family. Her ways of doing things were so different from Virginia's. And she was sure that her hampered, slowed-down movements and way of working was a cross to Virginia. But, here again, she couldn't help this. Age and the aging process had subtle, demanding ways of slowing one down, she reasoned.

She brushed and combed her long, silken, white hair then did it up neatly on her head before having her private devotions and going downstairs. She enjoyed the early part of the morning, when little else was stirring but the happy birds and the merry breezes. It gave her time to meditate and think on the good things of God.

She walked to the swing on the porch and sat down in it, her Bible in her hands, praying for guidance and direction for the future. She recalled Virginia's look of displeasure when she forgot to take the cake out of the oven and it burned. "But I told you to watch it, Mother!" Virginia had exclaimed with a hint of impatience in her voice.

Maggie sighed. It was too bad that she had forgotten about the cake. But things like this were becoming commonplace with her anymore. And it grieved her. Oh, how it grieved her. She, who had always been so particular and careful, so reliable when she made a promise and was told to do a thing, regardless of how small. Perhaps it would be best if she took Martha's advise and suggestion and moved into one of those apartments. The two of them
could be in the same building and on the same floor, and they could look after each other, she thought. But oh, it would be so hard to do! Still...

Getting off the swing, she hurried inside to her writing desk. She would write Martha now; no sense in putting it off. If she had to do it, well, the quicker she got at it the better for her. She may change her mind if she waited too long, and she did want only what was best for Virginia and Stan and Andrew.

Taking paper from her desk, Maggie began to write. A big tear tumbled from her eye and splattered onto the paper, smearing the ink. She took another sheet and tried again. This time her hand trembled so until she couldn't write.

"This will never do!" she chided herself out loud. Martha would know something was wrong unless she did better. She had once been the town's secretary, and her records and minutes were always neat and tidy beyond all reproach. Her calligraphy was worthy of a past age when writing was valued for its own sake.

She tried a third time without success. Her hand would not remain steady enough for neatness in the slightest semblance even. It distressed Maggie. Sighing, she picked up a religious magazine and began reading:

"There are times when even the bravest and most cheerful of us know days of darkness--" the writer penned, "the desolate winds of loneliness . . . the aching misery of anxiety unrelieved . . . "What can we do with these sometimes intolerable burdens? Often there is no one to whom we may turn . . .

"So the fears and anxieties pile up until we become frantic. The mind runs about like a wild creature trying to escape from a trap. Our fears take hold and we create a totally unrealistic picture which scares us (nearly) to death, paralyzes any constructive thinking and reduces us to a state of complete inability to cope with the contingency."

Maggie smiled. Then she re-read the paragraphs through a second time. It was as though the writer had known her anxiety . . . her confusion . . . and had written it for her alone, she thought.
Over and over again the Bible told her to be still, to be quiet, to relax and to wait for God to help and come to her rescue.

Maggie bowed her head and closed her eyes. She would get still. Yes, in spite of troublesome thoughts, she would relax and be quiet and watch God work. Almost immediately, Scripture portions began flooding her mind and comforting her soul:

"In quietness and confidence shall be your strength... Fear not; stand still and see the salvation of the Lord . . . Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance . . . Fear thou not, neither be thou dismayed, for I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand . . . Lo, I am with thee alway . . . What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee."

Maggie dropped her head in her hands and wept for joy. So filled was she with God's blessing that she didn't hear the light footfall in the room.

"Mother, are you all right, dear?" It was Virginia.

Maggie raised her tear-filled eyes and met those of her daughter's.

"What's wrong?" Virginia asked softly. "Something's been bothering you, hasn't it?"

Ever honest and conscientious, Maggie said, "I was just thinking what a bother I must be to you and Stan, dear. And I was going to write Martha and tell her I'll move into one of the apartments and..."

"Mother/" You'll do nothing of the kind. We couldn't do without you. Honestly we couldn't. You're the reason we moved in here., because we love you! Stan adores you. You're the mother he never knew. Oh, please, please don't say this, ever again! Andrew would pine his heart out if you'd move. He says you're the only one who takes time to listen to him and what he has to say. You're having such a great influence upon him. This is what Stan and I wanted. Please, Mother, don't mention this any more. Let's live together this way until the Lord takes us Home. Promise! This is your home; or had you forgotten?" Virginia asked, flinging her arms around Maggie's neck.
Maggie brushed the tears from her eyes and said softly, "I don't want to move, dear, not until my Heavenly Father moves me to my eternal Home. And now that I know I'm still needed here, what do you want for breakfast?"

"Your airy-light blueberry pancakes, Mother dear."

Dropping the messed up stationery into the wastebasket, Maggie kissed Virginia then hurried to the kitchen, feeling as light as a feather. God had worked for her!