THE DAY OF TRIUMPH
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Marianne sat, misty-eyed, staring straight ahead.

"Changed your mind yet?" Jared asked, reaching for her hand. "Time's running out."

As if she needed reminding! the tiny blond-headed woman thouht, praying silently for strength, not daring to look at Jared, whose blue-blue eyes would bore through her.
"It's not too late to change your mind, Marianne," he said in that easy sort of off-hand way of his.

Her eyelids fluttered. Always, she had found it easy to agree. Not just with Jared, but with everybody. She was spineless. She knew it. The line of least resistance was usually the one she took. Why? Because it was easier. It took no backbone.., no courage.., to say 'Okay, I'll go along with that.'

Jared squeezed her hand. Tears sprang to her eyes. Always, she felt that's the way it should be; Jared holding her hand. They had been high school sweethearts; grew up together in the same neighborhood, too. "I'm going to the city to set up my business," he told her upon graduation from college. "I'll be back for you, Annie dear. We'll be married as soon as I'm settled."

And now...now...

She gazed mechanically at the great silver planes coming in and going out, not really aware of the planes nor of the busy, milling, motley crowd of people around her. They had reached an impasse, Jared and she. Was it hurting Jared the way it was hurting her? she wondered, toying with her purse strap.

"Fifteen minutes," Jared announced solemnly.

"Is this a count-down?" she quipped, trying to sound funny yet knowing it was anything but funny.

Jared sat, staring through the windows, his jaw set in a decided manner. The airport became suddenly very crowded. He looked down at the petite figure in the chair beside him.

"It's stifling in here," Marianne said, plucking conversation out of the air.

"It won't be within twelve minutes," Jared said, adding, "Let's resolve things, Marianne. I don't see why you should feel this way. After all, you never used to take things so seriously."

She bit her lower lip, not daring to look up lest she cry. "I've told you--"
Jared squeezed her hand. "Sure. Sure. You've become religious. So what! I'm not a heathen; I believe in God. I don't have anything against going to church, if that's what you want."

She gave Jared a long sideways glance. There was no mockery in his expression, and no taunting, but no encouragement either.

She sighed. "Oh, Jared, believe me, it's something far deeper than going to church: It's Jesus Christ Himself! He's dwelling and living in me in all His fulness. What is your concept of God?"

He shrugged his broad shoulders, trying not to show his irritation. "I believe God exists. He was a great teacher..."

"What do you think of Jesus Christ, my Saviour?"

Jared stared straight ahead. "I have no opinion, Marianne. You know that. And why you've gone off the deep end in this... this religion business is still inconceivable to me. I always thought you were sensible, pliable."

"Pliable! Marianne winced. Pliable indeed! It was downright spinelessness. Suddenly, she realized that Jared and she were in two separate worlds, with no way to communicate, no way to make contact unless one conceded and stepped across the barrier to the other. Resolutely, she told her heart and herself there was no way she would give up Christ and His love and joy and peace. He was too precious, too altogether lovely and real to her soul. Jared must make the move, not she.

"I promise, I'll not stand in your way, Marianne. If you want church, then you may have church. Only don't force me." He fished in his pocket for something. "Since you've developed a distaste for rings... in your religion...", he said, "I bought this for you. Here, wear it. At least, there can be no harm in us being engaged. Everybody needs a good watch.

She didn't look up. "You already have my answer, Jared," she said softly, firmly.
He snapped the lid shut. "Thought you may have changed your mind," he answered, trying to sound nonchalant. He was hurt; she knew it. It hurt her, pained her.

Jared glanced at his watch. Then he got to his feet. Picking up his attache case, he said, "Well, I guess this is really goodbye; isn't it Marianne? And after all these beautiful years of knowing each other . . ."

She glanced at the floor. Her mouth felt dry, her throat hot. People milled around them, moving in a state of great agitation. Businessmen, with briefcases in hand, strode briskly toward the gate. Mothers, with babies, toddlers, diaper bags and baby paraphernalia under their arms, pushed and shoved their way through the crowd to the gate where they were permitted through, to move unhindered into the plane.

Families hovered together in small, intent groups, talking in muted conversation. Lovers clung to each other, their whispered words reaching no farther than their own ears. And Jared and Marianne? They remained in two separate worlds.

It was when she told him of her changed life, that Jared decided to make a quick trip to his home town. From the time he arrived, and learned that hers was more than a mere head-assenting religion, as he thought, the barrier stood between them. The gulf was fixed.

For three days, he came by to see her; to change her mind; to "talk some sense into her"--his words. And for three days, she witnessed to him; testified of her new life in Christ; how she had passed from death unto life; from sin to salvation; from darkness into light. "I'm a new creature in Christ," she had told him.

He had stormed and fussed and fumed; ranted and raved. Her deep, hidden, but working and ever abiding, inner peace and joy remained unruffled and unmoved. She had marveled at this knowledge. She was living in a whole new world. Everything was changed, and the Holy Spirit abiding within her heart in purifying, cleansing, and comforting power, gave her constant victor,. He had tried to argue, but she refused; tried to make her "give in" to his views, she remained calmly serene and firm.
Now they must part and nothing was settled on his part. He would say on "her part." He would, no doubt, think her stubborn. But in her heart, she knew this was not so. Her heart was soft and tender, indwelt by the Holy Ghost.

Suddenly, she stood to her feet as she heard a voice over the loudspeaker announcing Jared's flight. It was time for him to board the plane. In a burst of emotion, he clasped both her hands in his, squeezing them tightly. "Just tell me this, Marianne; do you love me?"

"Oh, Jared, yes. Yes. But I love Christ more. That is why I cannot..."

"I'll not play second fiddle!" he exclaimed sarcastically, pivoting in anger and stalking away through the gate and, finally, into the plane.

Marianne stood like one in a daze for a few minutes. The lines dwindled as people moved up the ramp and were absorbed into the belly of the plane. She watched until the last person disappeared inside and the door was closed. She heard the roar of the engine and saw the great silver bird move slowly backward, turning its nose toward the long runway for taxiing. And, gradually, she saw it sever itself from the earth, pull its wheels into its underside, and climb gracefully into the cloudless sky.

She turned from the window, amazed to discover that she alone remained at Gate 15. Only minutes ago, the place was packed. Jared was gone. Forever, she was sure. She felt stunned. Automatically, she began the long walk back to the lobby, her stride picking up speed as she walked. She had done the right thing; her heart told her so.

Once outside, she nearly ran toward her car. Her heart, though heavy, was singing. She felt light and wonderful. The Lord's smile was upon her; she felt it; Knew it! Oh, it was wonderful! A scripture verse flashed brightly and brilliantly across her mind, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"

She slid beneath the steering wheel and wept for joy. She was no longer spineless, nor had she followed the line of least resistance. No. No, a thousand times no. The Holy Ghost within her had given her power. Power to overcome; to be more than conqueror. Jared was gone out of her life, she
had no doubt about it, and, through Christ, she had triumphed. How long it
would take her to recover from the pain, the love, and the hurt, she didn't
know. But of one thing she was confident: Her new-found Christ would pour
the oil of healing in her heart and give her strength for each tomorrow.

With a song of victory on her lips and praise in her heart, Marianne
started the car and headed toward home.