Kendra awoke with a start. Where was she? Certainly not in her own bed. Trembling, she sat up in bed. Her fingers walked across the sheet to where Dane should have been. Then she remembered. With a sickening feeling, it came rolling back upon her.

Knowing that further sleep was impossible, she got up and dressed quickly. Then she hurried into the small kitchen and turned on some heat. It was cold in the mountains in the early pre-dawn and post-dawn hours.
Making a quick cup of tea, and popping raisin bread into the toaster, she drew her robe more tightly around her, hoping to ward off the penetrating cold until the room would be warmed up enough for her to eat in comfort and warmth. Once, she walked to the window and peered out into the inky blackness. Should it be this dark? she wondered, checking her watch for the time. A storm was brewing, she knew. Fear clutched her heart. Why did Dane have to go fishing? she wondered, today of all days! He knew how fearful she was of storms.

But what did it matter? she reasoned. They meant almost nothing to each other anymore. They were merely two people living together in the same house . . . under the same roof . . . but living together like strangers. And this ridiculous out-of-the-way cabin at the end of nowhere (it seemed), was only adding to their estrangement. But then, this arrangement couldn't have been helped; it was kindness on Britt and Holly's part. And Britt and Holly would be the two last people in the world to suspicion trouble between Dane and her, Kendra knew.

Over the steaming-hot tea and delicious raisin toast, Kendra's thoughts drifted back to yesterday's wedding. Holly looked radiant and beautiful in her simple wedding gown. Lacking the frills and pageantry of her own wedding, Kendra had to admit that her dearest friend's marriage and wedding to Britt Knox was far more reverent and meaningful than hers and Dane's had been. She had been so concerned about the material side of things, wanting everything done to absolute perfection and beauty. Holly, it seemed, had desired mainly that her wedding be a holy thing; a time when the onlooker as well as those in the bridal party be aware of the sacredness of the hour . . . the binding vows and restrictions: A for-life pact and agreement.

Kendra shivered. For life! Then she laughed a nervous laugh. For her and Dane the vows were at an end. They'd come to the end of the rope., the end of the way. In fact, Dane had told her that just this once, they'd take the comfortable cabin offered to them by Britt, whose father was sole owner of the place, then they'd go home and get that divorce. No need living together when two people were as totally incompatible as they were, they decided.

Kendra walked to the window again and looked out. Still the blackness hung like an evil curtain in the sky. Dane should not be out on the lake in a storm, she reasoned, especially not alone.
She poured herself a second cup of tea, then paced the comfortable cabin restlessly, Holly's wedding vows tumbling over her soul with alarming force. Why hadn't she noticed all she had given assent to when Dane and she were married? she wondered with a tremble in her body. To promise a thing for life...! It was a staggering thought. Yet, Holly had done it emphatically and..., and willingly. Yes, much as she hated to use the word, she had to, for it was all too obvious that Holly had willingly and joyously repeated those life-binding vows, giving, honoring, and doing for Britt.

"Till death do thee part," the minister had said to the two happy people.

Kendra shook herself, as if trying to shake the words off her..., away from her mind. But they stuck; they refused to be shaken: "Till death do thee part..."

She hurried to the bedroom and made the bed. Perhaps if she busied herself, she could forget the troublesome vows, brought sharply back to her by Holly's lovely wedding. If only she and Dane could have gotten out of the wedding someway! But that was impossible: She and Holly had planned things this way when each was single; Holly would be her maid of honor and she would be Holly's. Only, since she had married Dane, it made her Holly's matron of honor. They had been bosom friends all through high school and their college days, right up to the time of her marriage to Dane, two years and four months ago.

Kendra stopped working. Two years and four months! Was that all the longer she'd been married to Dane? They who had once been so happy in each other's presence; they who were considered the "ideal couple." Was it possible that now, after so short a period, they were going to call it quits and get a divorce? But did they have a right to do this? After those sacred, solemn vows last night...

In fear and disgust, Kendra raced from the room to the comfortable living-dining room. Turning a light on, she picked up the book which she had lain on one of the end tables before going to bed after she had returned from the wedding last night. But try as she may, her mind refused to concentrate on anything besides the sacred vows. They thundered in her brain and hammered her heart... "I will; I do; till death do thee part."
But they were meant for people whose lives were compatible, she argued silently. But conscience and sound reason and wisdom declared solemnly and judgmentally that God's Word had nothing whatever to say about compatibility or incompatibility; the truth remained unchanged: "Till death do thee part." It was indeed a life-binding contract; her to Dane and Dane to her.

A clap of thunder shook the cabin followed by a blinding shaft of lightning, then another and another. Then the wind began to blow. Never, in her entire young life, had Kendra witnessed what she saw beyond the windows. Trees, swaying and bending at the wind's insistence and continual perseverance, looked like puppets of the forest. They were powerless to remain still and erect. Many of them, snapping and cracking like the explosion of a gun, succumbed to the supernatural force and toppled helplessly to the ground, their great trunks jagged, rugged reminders of the once-stately trees.

Kendra felt panic boil up inside her. Dane? Where was he? Dead, no doubt. No one could survive these demon winds, she was sure. Not even she was safe; at any moment, one of the trees might come crashing down on the roof of the cabin-house and crush it to bits.

She looked around for some place to hide till the vengeance of the storm was spent, but she found none. In a flood of remembrance, all she once had been and known, and all she now was, came washing over her in a downpour equal to the pouring rain outside. In many respects, she was responsible for the fastly falling-apart marriage between Dane and herself. She was selfish and self-willed and headstrong; she wanted things, things and more things, and Dane's limited paycheck had never been big enough to suit her.

The branch of a tree whipped the roof of the building with a resounding blow and Kendra, thinking the roof would soon cave in and kill her, dropped to her knees on the floor and begged forgiveness of God. "I'm a miserable backslider," she confessed, crying and pleading for mercy. "If you'll forgive me, dear God, I'll serve you all the days of my life. Have mercy on me and pardon my deep sin and iniquity for wanting to leave my husband and separate from him. I'm sorry. Sorry! I'll never do it again . . ."
Long after she knew she was forgiven and had once again obtained inner peace and rest, Kendra stood inside the window watching the storm and looking toward the vast lake, praying and weeping over Dane. He should have been to the cabin long ago, she rationalized. Ever the sensible one, he wouldn't have remained on the lake when he saw a storm approaching. When did he leave? She hadn't heard him. Suddenly she wanted him to be safe. She longed to see him.

The black, overhead shroud was slowly lifting and Kendra was able to see the dock where the boat had been moored. Donning a light-weight raincoat, she opened the door and stepped outside. It was still raining and thunder continued growling and rumbling in the heavens, but it was at a distance now. Stepping carefully around broken-down limbs and fallen trees, she made her way to the lake in search of the boat and her husband. But not the slightest sight of a boat could she see, nothing but water, water, and more water. Cupping her hands to her mouth, she called Dane's name. Her only answer and response was a peal of distant thunder.

He was dead, she was sure. Somewhere in that churning mass of foam, Dane's body was churning, too! "No! No!" she cried aloud in anguish. "Oh, God, don't let it be. Please. Please! I love him. Love him! I only now realize how much."

She sat on the wooden dock and, weeping brokenly, she buried her face in her hands, wondering how she could live without Dane's presence. One hour went by, then two; still she sat, trying to figure out what, or when, things had begun happening to extinguish the light of their romance and vowing to God, that, would He bring Dane back to her again, she would make their marriage work. Like every other good thing, Kendra realized now, one's marriage needed to be worked at and cultivated.

She was so busy with her thoughts that she failed to see a boat making its way toward the shore.

"Kendra! Kendra!" a voice called, thrilling her through and through.

Getting to her feet, she ran to the far end of the dock and almost jumped into the water, calling brokenly, "Dane! Oh, thank God, you're safe."
Pulling the boat alongside the dock and securing it tightly to the post, Dane jumped up beside his wife. "You're crying, dear!" he exclaimed, folding her to his heart. "And I guess I am, too. Oh, Kendra, we can't separate! We can't--I love you. And... and those vows. I couldn't get away from what I heard last night. Out there," he said pointing to the churning water, "when it looked like I would drown, I did business with God. I'm saved, Kendra dear. Forgiven! And by God's grace, our marriage has only just begun. I love you, dear wife. Love you!"

"And I love you, too, Dane. Oh, how I love you! While the storm raged, I found an altar of prayer and I, too, am forgiven. And Dane, this time I mean to really dig in and get sanctified wholly. I want to be completely dead to self and alive unto Christ. Our marriage will be a beautiful thing if each of us gets sanctified."

"Amen and amen, my dear. I'm so thankful for this cabin, Kendra. I'll always remember what happened to me today. And this will be a second honeymoon for us, too."

"Come, my dearest husband," she said with concern in her voice. "You are soaked to the skin and must get into dry clothes. I love you too much to let anything happen to you now."

"And I feel the same way," Dane declared. "'Till death do us part,' he whispered softly-close to her ear as they walked together toward the cabin.