Pamela looked across the room to where her brother, Dan, sat head bent diligently over his school work, his pen poised and ready to go to work. How she longed for the same inner calm and ever-unruffled spirit like her twin had. Take today, for instance, when Big Al . . . the bully of the entire school . . . had tried to humiliate Dan and make him appear inferior to the "big one."
Dan continued on his way with a smile, acting like Big Al had never even slurred him.

Her brother was so very noble and . . . and Christ-like, she thought. He never had the slightest hint of trying to get even, always maintaining that God knew better how to handle the Big Al's in the world than he could possibly begin to know how to handle them. And he left it that way.

Pamela looked through the school window to the playground outside, where the grade school children howled and squealed with delight as they romped and played in the snow, and for one brief moment, she forgot about Big Al and his great hulking frame and bully-like tactics. Then a spit ball flew across the room and hit her hard between the eyes. "Ouch!"

The exclamation of pain and surprise left her lips before she realized and remembered that she was in school . . . in class, at that! . . . and not at home, daydreaming.

"Pamela," Miss Oakes said sharply, "you are in school. Remember this!" It was an order. A command.

"Ye . . . yes, ma'am," she replied, rubbing the spot where the hard, well-wadded up piece of wet paper had struck.

Big Al snickered. Miss Oakes got to her feet. Standing almost five feet ten inches tall, her eyes gray balls of seeming piercing, penetrating steel, she demanded, "What's wrong?"

Silence, total and oppressive, ruled and filled the room. The steel-gray eyes didn't miss a thing; not a thing! Glancing from Pamela to each student in the classroom, she said, "All right, what happened, Pam?"

Rather than answer, Pamela held the spit ball up for Miss Oakes to see. Then, seeing the scarlet-red welt between Pain's eyes, the teacher continued her probing. "Who did it?" she asked.

Again, there was silence. Miss Oakes' eyes seemed to bore holes through the classroom as they roamed from one student to the next. Almost as if speaking to herself, she said, "Hm-m! Had to come pretty far, and be thrown with great force and impact to leave a mark like that." Then pointing a
long, slender index finger at the back seat, she said with great finality, "You will stay after school, Al, and explain why you did that" That was all; nothing more, nothing less.

Al didn't deny the act; but his eyes looked like sparks of fire when Pam had the courage to cast a shy and timid glance in his direction. It was a warning of worse things to come.

Pam trembled, looking over at her brother, he smiled warmly in her direction; a smile that carried with it the promise of protection.

It was hard to concentrate after that, but she made a noble attempt, and when the dismissal bell finally rang, she all but ran to her locker. With unusual speed, she was soon in her coat, her boots and her wool tam. Then she raced for the door, not waiting for Dan. She couldn't get home fast enough, she felt.

She was almost home when she turned and saw Big Al come barrelling down the sidewalk after her. He reminded her of another Goliath, so tall was he and broad shouldered. His steps . . . one to her five or six . . . soon brought him face to face with her.

"I'll get even with you; see if I don't, Pamela Burkhart!" he bellowed almost like a bull. His eyes flashed fire and his nostrils dilated.

How she did it, or what prompted her to do it, Pamela couldn't account for at the time, but suddenly, she spun around and stood close to him. "Why do you try to be so impressive?" she asked. "And why do you always pick on people smaller than you? If you really wanted to prove chivalry . . . your great strength and your importance . . . you ought to spar with someone nearer your equal. Now leave me alone." Turning, she ran down the street, tears streaming down her cheeks.

Stumbling up the porch steps, she opened the door and dropped into the nearest chair, trembling like a leaf in fall.

"Why, Pam!" Mrs. Burkhart exclaimed, coming from the kitchen. "What's wrong with you? I thought I heard the door open and close. What happened?"
"It's Al again! Honestly, Mother, sometimes I think I'll never go to school again. He's horrid, unbearable, mean and . . . and . . ."

"But he does have a soul, Pam; and he is one for whom Christ died . . ." The unfinished sentence hung meaningfully in the room.

"Please, Mother, don't say that! Sometimes I wonder . . ."

"Hush! He does have a soul, and God loves him every bit as much as He loved any of us. Why not try Thanksgiving?"

"For him? Impossible. You're not around him; you don't know how utterly and completely obnoxious he can make himself. Look," she said, pointing to the still-red mark between her eyes. "This is just a sample of what he does. Today, it was my turn to be the recipient of one of his 'daring deeds.' I . . . I almost hate him."

Mrs. Burkhart gasped. "Then you're a murderer, Pamela. Jesus said, 'Whosoever hateth his brother . . is a murderer.'"

"Well, I guess it's not that bad. But I despise him."

"This could well be God's way of opening your eyes; of revealing the inner you . . . the secret recesses and cloistered chambers of your heart. What you are saying is quite a revelation to me. And it frightens me, Pam. Now go to your room and do some meditating. See if God doesn't reveal some frightening things to you."

Still crying, she obeyed and went into her bedroom, feeling wounded that her mother didn't understand. At first, she merely sat, feeling sorry for herself. Then, slowly but forcibly, her mother's words struck home. Reaching for her Bible, she read the verse for herself, shuddering in revealed light. Then, as more carnal traits became exposed by the probing of the gentle Holy Spirit, Pam dropped to her knees by the bed, begging God's forgiveness for words uttered, both to Al and to her mother.

The peace and joy of forgiveness was quickly but surely given; then she began to pray for the infilling, purifying, cleansing fire of Pentecost to utterly crucify and eradicate the "bent to sin" principle. To destroy and kill the
"old man," lurking so insidiously and destructively in the hidden, and not so hidden, recesses of her heart.

The answer came; instantly, she knew she was sanctified wholly. Rushing from the room into her mother's arms, she cried, "Thanks, Mother, for being faithful to me and to my soul. My entire attitude is changed toward Al. My heart is filled with Christian love and compassion for him. Do you mind if I go to his home and tell him I'm sorry for everything I said to him? I wasn't Christ-like at all. Oh, what must he think of the Christ whom I have tried to represent! I'm so ashamed. But I must rectify my wrongs."

"Of course, Pam. And you may leave with my prayers and my blessing following you. But aren't you afraid?"

"Not any more. I'll hurry. Bye, Mom."

Pam rushed down the sidewalk, hoping she would find the right house. She had heard that Al lived on Ivy Street, across the railroad tracks, in a run-down clapboard house. Oh, she must find him! She must! Praying fervently, she began running.

Once across the tracks, she located the dirt street with its equally shoddy-looking row of houses. Then she saw the clapboard house. Rushing up to the door, she knocked then waited.

Almost instantly, a woman appeared inside the now-open door. "Forevermore, child, what brings you here on a cold evening like this?" the woman asked, scrutinizing Pam from head to toe in a single sweeping glance.

"Is Al in, Mrs. Rupert? I must see him. Please! It's urgent."

"Why, yes, he is here. Come inside, please."

"Thank you. You are most kind."

"Al," the tall but gentle-mannered woman called, "a girl to see you. Come here."
"And who would want to see me?" he asked, coming from the hallway and towering in the kitchen-living room doorway. "So-o!" he declared sarcastically. "Little Miss Puritan's conscience got to bothering her. Aha!"

"Right. It did. Terribly so."

"Ha, ha, ha, ha," he mocked.

"Listen to me, Al, please!" Pamela begged, moving over and standing beside him, her four foot eleven and a half inch frame seeming ant-like compared to his six foot six.

"You're not scared of me anymore, is that it?" he taunted, with a snarl.

"Not the least. Now listen to me; I want to ask your forgiveness for everything I said to you on the sidewalk today when you followed me home from school. I'm sorry. Oh, so sorry. I just prayed through and got saved about an hour or so ago. Then, I prayed again and God sanctified me wholly. That want-to-talk-back is gone completely. Thanks, Al, for trying to be such a bully: It helped to reveal the real nature of my depraved heart. Now, may I have prayer with you, please? God wants to change you and make you a new creation in Him."

Al's mouth stood agape in wild surprise. Quickly, Pamela knelt and began praying.

Tears stood in Mrs. Rupert's eyes, when Pam finished. Getting to her feet and taking the woman's work-worn hands in hers, she said, "Do you know Jesus, Mrs. Rupert?"

"N . . . not any more. Not since Al's father took off and left us to fend the best we could some better than fourteen years ago."

"You once knew Him?"

"Oh, yes."

"Then why not return to Him now? He's waiting to pardon and forgive."
Mrs. Rupert searched the sincere face before her. "No . . . not now," she answered. "I have some 'pieces' to sort out of my heart and my mind. But I want to get back; I really do."

"Then do it now. Please!"

"I will; it's a promise, but not now. I need to make a few house calls, like you have just done."

A sudden, bright idea broke like sunlight somewhere inside Pamela's brain. "Please," she begged, "will you and Al spend Thanksgiving at our house? Be our guests? We'd love having you. Mother always fixes enough for a threshing crew. You'd enjoy that, wouldn't you, Al? You and Dan could play ping pong in the basement -- over one of mother's old, worn-out kitchen tables. But it serves the purpose beautifully. We'd all have such a good time together. You need us; we need you. I mean this. And mother told me I could invite whom I wanted to for Thanksgiving."

"What do you think of it, Al? There won't be much here to eat, that's for sure. And I have missed the fellowship of other women. Tell you what," she cried joyfully, "We'll be there. We do need you, both Al and I."

"And we need you. What's more, we want you. Al needs a father-image, and dad's the greatest! He'll do all he can to help, see if he doesn't."

A light came on in the bully's eyes, making them look hungry and child-like, Pam thought as she left, carrying the smile he'd given her all the way home with her, warming her inmost being and giving her a feeling of victory and accomplishment. Beneath the surface of the hard crust, she detected a melting of the "glacier"; a crumbling of the "crater." God was working. True love, a caring heart, and a heart of true thanksgiving for all things and all circumstances, would accomplish what had already begun in each of the Rupert's hearts.

Quite suddenly, Pamela understood why the bully act . . . the he-man, strong act: a vagrant father, lost to the family so far as wife and son were concerned; scarcity of food; deplorable living conditions. It all added up to the creation of a real "he-man," a "somebody." But, sadly enough, the act was unbecoming to the senior; it didn't "fit" him.
Pamela began to cry. Walking home in the gathering dusk of early twilight, she prayed, claiming son's and mother's soul for Jesus Christ. Then she lifted her face skyward. "In everything give thanks," she quoted softly aloud, "for this is the will of God . . . concerning you.' Thank you . . . thank you! . . . dear Lord, for Big Al. From the bottom of my soul, thank you."