Kay tossed the last garment into the suitcase and snapped the lock shut with a loud click. Then she slipped into her coat and loaded the luggage into the car trunk. Thanksgiving! The very thought of it brought a warm glow to her cheeks and quickened her pulse rate. It would be wonderful to be home again. Home, with father and mother, Ginny Lou and Marget and yes, Sam and Roy, too.
Kay sighed, recalling the myriad times her twin brothers had teased her to tears, then she slid behind the wheel of the car and was on her way, leaving the campus of Staunton College behind her. She was eager and anxious to put as many miles as she could behind her before she must turn off for a bite of lunch and have the oil in her car checked.

She smiled and patted the steering wheel affectionately. The car was old, to be sure, and it did use more than its share of oil, she admitted silently, doing a quick mental tabulation of the number of quarts she had had to buy the past few weeks; but it had become a sort of "heirloom" thing in the family. It belonged. It would always belong. Even when it passed its age of usefulness, Kay knew that her father, or one of her brothers, would make a place for it somewhere on the farm. Perhaps it would become a sort of museum piece, sitting sedately and quietly on their sprawling front lawn. It was possible, she knew, because it had been in the family ever since her parents were married and, in no way, would it become a cast-away.

She laughed aloud, recalling the stares and raised eyebrows when she pulled into the curving driveway of Staunton Hall and began unloading her belongings. The car had looked a trifle outdated and out of place, standing along the curb between Stingrays, T-Birds, Bonnevilles, Oldsmobiles, a Rolls Royce and several Cadillacs, she remembered. But it had gotten her there and this was something to be thankful for, she had mused, ignoring the stares and answering with a bit of light, good-humored banter when one of the girls had made a remark about the "old gray mare" not being what she used to be.

The name stuck, and "the old gray mare" became an accepted part of Staunton. So much so that a few of the students, interested in antiques, insisted upon cleaning "her" up and restoring "her" . . . "As much as lieth within us" . . . (Martin Dobnecker's words.) The boys, assisted by two female antique buffs, did a super job on the car, not only locating and installing numerous pieces of out-dated, hard-to-find handsome bric-a-brac, but polishing and waxing its exterior to a glossy shine as well.

Picking up an apple, she bit into it hungrily, savoring every ounce of its delicious flavor and juicy tartness, the thought of being home for Thanksgiving sending shivers of delight and pure joy through her being.
She was fortunate to live within driving distance, she soliloquized thankfully. Many of the students lived too far away to get home for both Christmas and Thanksgiving. Barring no trouble, she should be home by nightfall, God willing. She wished her roommate could have come home with her; but Louise's work schedule was such that this prospect was prohibited.

"Poor Louise!" Kay uttered the sentence aloud, feeling sorry for the pretty, auburn-haired girl with the sad countenance. Something was bothering Louise; she was sure of it. But what? Not one to pry or meddle in other's affairs, Kay had asked no questions. She was confident of the fact that when Louise got ready to talk, she'd do so. Until such a time came . . . if it ever did . . . she would continue on as she had been doing . . caring and loving.

The blue outline of mountains loomed up before her as she topped the crest of a hill and her heart did a quick flip-flop of joy. She loved the mountains. Like the old car, they had been an integral part of her life from its very beginning. Her father's farm joined hard to the back of one of the ranges of the very mountains which she saw off in the distance. It was all a sort of link between her beautiful past and the college present.

Kay accelerated more heavily, hoping to be well over the distant mountain before noon. She would stop at the service station nestled snugly and cozily in a cluster of pines some distance away from the opposite side of the mountain, she decided, recalling that she had seen a small, clean-looking diner not too far from the station. She would have a triple benefit by stopping there, she mused . . . an opportunity to stretch and exercise her legs, have her oil checked and eat at the diner. No need for two stops.

She pushed ahead, noticing the lead-gray clouds that hung menacingly over the mountain range and which were even now obliterating the blue sky above her. It was just another snow squall, she mused, familiar with the numerous, sudden squalls that developed on the mountains and in the valleys ahead. She remembered standing inside the kitchen window of their farmhouse and watching the snow from many such squalls as it powdered the mountain seven miles distant, then blew its way speedily across their valley to the mountain along their farm. It looked like a moving sheet of white, Kay recalled with a smile, leaving almost as quickly as it had come and taking with it the heavy lead-gray overcast. She had loved watching these
squalls, always marveling at the brilliant and glorious appearing of the sun in the wake of the vanishing dark, gray clouds.

She finished her apple and put the core in the litter bag on the floor beside her, noticing the tiny flakes of snow falling on to the hood of the car. What if this was more than a mere squall? Suppose she got into a real blizzard, then what?

The thought of a blizzard pushed a panic button inside her. She became tense and fearful. She could "wait it out," she knew. But then, many of the blizzards she had witnessed in her young life lasted for many hours, days, even.

Again, she accelerated heavily, wishing she had one of the sleek, fast-moving cars like some of her friends had. She would get home faster.

The car skidded and Kay lifted her foot off the gas pedal. Whether she wanted to or not, she would have to slow down; the road was getting icy. "O God, help me!" she cried.

The wind was rising, sending the tiny flakes of snow scurrying to the side of the road in billowy, smoky-looking hurdles. With every mile she made, Kay noticed the snowfall was getting heavier and by the time she reached the foot of the first mountain over which she must cross, her visibility was poor.

Nobly and bravely, she started up its twisting, winding road, panic boiling up inside her. Suppose she got stuck? What if she became stranded, alone? And what if she froze to death?

Brushing a trembling hand over her eyes, she pushed the nagging, mind-disturbing questions out of her head. Professor Hartley had insisted upon "positive" thinking for his students. The power of positive thinking could alter every circumstance and change anything and everything, the teacher had said.

Kay tried desperately to put the philosophy into practice; but try as she may, the snow continued to fall. Heavier and heavier it fell as she climbed the steep mountain. A lumbering snow plow almost collided with her as she rounded a hairpin curve, but she managed to steer the car far enough to the side to avoid the collision. She felt weak and drained of strength once the
plow was behind her. But she continued onward, straining to see the road ahead, her knuckles white against the steering wheel's dark outline.

Reaching the mountain's summit, she realized that the storm was no mere squall. Nor could any amount of the professor's "positive thinking" emphasis slacken the pace of the on-rushing, lastly-drifting, ever-deepening snow. Disgusted, she tossed the philosophy-theory out of her mind. It didn't work; it didn't She had been a fool to have accepted it and believed it so completely. God was still in charge of His universe; this in spite of the professor's strong and heated denial of there ever being a God.

Like one awaking from a bad dream, Kay's eyes were suddenly opened. She had actually believed and absorbed the man's teaching! Little wonder that her inner joy and peace were gone.

The car did a treacherous near turn-around on the road and Kay's ever thought was brought suddenly to the fore on utter and total concentration of driving. It would be dreadful to careen off the road and be hurled suddenly down the mountain's steep side, she thought with horror, inching her way down the serpent-like road, mile after nerve-shattering mile.

After what seemed like hours, she reached the bottom. Breathing a sigh of profound relief and trying to untangle the knots that seemed to have formed in every part of her nerve center, she pulled into the service station and started to open the door.

"Stay inside, lady," a male voice instructed "No need getting out; Tom's closed up. No business, you know. Not with a storm like this."

"But I need my oil checked!" Kay declared, getting out of the car. "I need a quart; I'm sure I do."

The man, dressed in a thick, sheepwool-lined coat and heavy cap with ear lappers, only smiled, "Sorry he said apologetically, "the place is locked up. I'm here helping anyone who may need rooming for the night. No passage through ahead. Snow's piled five feet high already with drifts."

"But I've got to get through; I'm going home for Thanksgiving."
"You mean you were going home. Not any more, lady; at least not today. The snowplows can't even get through in some places; how do you think you'd manage? Sorry. Do you have any place else to go? If not, I'll find you someone who'll give you food and shelter for the night."

Like one in a daze, Kay got back into the car and started ahead, toward the diner, unmindful of the fact that she hadn't even thanked the man for his kind offer of help.

The diner buzzed with conversation as she entered its doors. It seemed to be the general meeting place during this storm. Where did everybody come from? she wondered, and where were they going? Were they travelers like herself, who were stranded in the storm?

Finding a booth in a far corner, she sat down, wondering what she would do and where she would stay. Bits of conversation floated to her ears: "Biggest snow storm we've had in thirty years," a man declared. "You mean, the biggest this early," another corrected "And it gets worse farther ahead . . ."

Kay squeezed her hands over her ears, not wanting to hear. But in spite of it, she heard. Suddenly, she wanted to cry, hard.

"May I help you, please?"

Kay turned and saw a smiling waitress standing before her.

"Oh, I'm sorry. I haven't looked at the menu," she replied.

"How about a cup of coffee?" the girl asked softly.

"Hot chocolate with marshmallows," Kay answered, scanning the menu before her.

In a very little while, the waitress was back and Kay placed her order. Sipping the steaming, creamy hot chocolate, her spirit revived. Perhaps she could stay at the diner and wait out the storm, she mused. It would not be like at home but at least she wouldn't be outside in her car freezing to death.
"You're traveling, aren't you?" The dark-haired girl broke into Kay's thoughts with the question as she set the meal before her.

"I was," Kay corrected. "Looks like I'll be stationary for quite some time."

"Going home for Thanksgiving, no doubt."

"Yes, and I was so excited."

"Our disappointments are God's appointments," the lovely waitress said softly, turning and hurrying away.

Tears sprang into Kay's eyes. There was a time she believed that very thing. (How long ago was it?)

"Do you have a place to stay while you wait the storm out?" a man's voice asked, breaking into her thoughts.

Brushing the tears away, Kay said, "I... I... thought... well, I'm hoping they'll let me stay on here at the diner."

"No need for that; I'm here to take Naomi home when she gets off work. You may come to our farm. There's room and board free."

Kay looked into the face of the man whose eyes reflected the same warmth as did those of the young woman who waited on her. "Thank you kindly," she said quickly.

Scrutinizing her carefully, the man asked, "You wouldn't know John Crestfield, would you? You sure look like a daughter of his..."

Kay gasped. Her fork dropped to her plate. "He... he's my father!" she exclaimed. "At least that's dad's name. But we live in..."

The man laughed pleasantly. "I know where you live, Your dad said he'd never leave the home place and, knowing him like I do, well, he won't. Not unless God says 'move.' Years ago, I farmed the Wentzler's farm... two farms away from yours, over in the valley. It was your father's godly living and daily example of Christ that finally won my stubborn, hell-bent heart and..."
turned me to God. I owe so much to John. The least I can do is shelter and care for the daughter of my most valued Christian friend. You are saved and sanctified wholly, like your father?"

The question, so pointed and plain . . . so simple . . . went through Kay's heart like a dart. It cut and pained her. "I . . . I was," she replied truthfully.

"But not now?"

"Not now. But I will be. Yes, by the grace of God, I will be. You see, I'm in college. I listened to and heeded teachings contrary to the Bible. But I see the error of my ways and I mean to do something about it."

"Then you must come home with us. Our altars are all intact and God meets with us. We'll send you home to your parents . . . after the storm . . . the way they remembered you before you went away to college. I'll call and tell them you're snowbound and that you're staying with us till the storm passes by. Now eat your food; Naomi's almost through working, then we'll head for home."

Suddenly, Kay felt happy. The delayed Thanksgiving with her folks was working together for good, her good. She would go home the way she had been when she went away to college . . . saved from all sin and sanctified wholly. What's more, she would return to Staunton, load all her belongings into the car and head home to never again return to the atheistic teachings of her professors and teachers.

Her heart leaped for joy. She was thankful for the delay in getting home, truly thankful. Her disappointment was indeed God's appointment.