Kevin Catlett pulled the shiny blue sports car into a parking space behind the drug store. Sliding out of the car, he locked the door and walked quietly in through the back door of the modern store. He was thankful that the place was almost totally deserted and that the pharmacist was deeply engrossed in filling prescriptions for several couples who had entered by the front door.
In a carelessly-casual way, he sauntered down one aisle then another, picking up hair oils, deodorants and aftershave lotions, pretending to be looking for just the right thing . . . the proper brand . . . before replacing each back on the shelf from which he had gotten it. Then, just as casually and carefree, he made his way to the reading section, where row upon row of magazines and paper back books filled the shelves and lined the racks of one entire portion of the store.

He looked around to make sure no one was there whom he knew before removing a magazine quickly from the rack. Grabbing an Arizona Highways from a nearby shelf he thrust the first magazine between its pages and began looking, making sure the beautiful and informative Arizona Highways completely covered and concealed the name and the picture of the first magazine.

In no time at all, he became totally engrossed and absorbed in the lewd magazine. He knew he should not be looking at it. But for better than seven weeks now he had made it a habit to stop in at the drug store on his way home from his part-time job. It was now a part of him; a binding, sinful habit that he couldn't break. His conscience still niggled him, to be sure, but not nearly so loud and "screaming" as when he dared himself to take that first look and read those first lines.

Recalling the sick feeling inside his heart over that first look, and the screaming warning sirens of his conscience, Kevin quickly put the magazines back where they belonged then hurried toward the rear exit.

"Hi, Kevin," a voice called from across the aisle.

Kevin felt the color rise in his face. When had Joe come into the store? he wondered. Trying to conceal his frustration, he said matter-of-factly, "Hi, Joe. Fancy seeing you down here!"

"And why not? I might say the same about you. Truth is, you've strayed far from your home territory."

Again Kevin felt the hot flush of blood rush to his face. He smiled. Waving a hand Joe's way, he said, "Nice seeing you, Joe. I must be going. How about coming out to church on Sunday morning?"
Joe let out a mocking laugh. "Are you kidding!" he exclaimed, following Kevin outside and repeating emphatically, "Are you kidding?"

Kevin turned and looked at Joe. "OK, what's teeing you off? Out with it!" he said, feeling suddenly sick in the pit of his stomach.

Making a wide arc with his hands, Joe's words tumbled out. "Don't ask me to church again, Kevin," he answered, almost harshly. "Not ever! You're a hypocrite; you're not real. You lead a dual life... one thing around us fellows, another when you're alone."

Kevin gasped. He opened his mouth to speak but Joe stopped him short. "I know now why you come to Dad's drug store..."

Again Kevin gasped.

"Oh, I know you didn't know that my dad owns the slab of concrete on this corner and the four-walled structure setting on it, but he does. For weeks, he's been telling me about a fellow who comes into the store and looks at girlie magazines by covering them up behind a decent publication. Dad wondered who the guy was. So did I. Now I know. But I never would have thought it was you."

"I... I'm sorry, Joe."

"Sure. Sure. Isn't a criminal sorry, too, when he's caught?" Joe declared, gesticulating wildly with his hands. "But I never would have thought it of you. I was just beginning to listen with my heart, when you'd tell me about Jesus and His power to save and to forgive from all sin. Now I don't believe a word of it. You say one thing with your mouth but your life says another. Goodnight, Kevin." And Joe rushed back into the store, leaving Kevin standing by the car, trembling like a leaf in late fall.

Kevin unlocked the car door and slid behind the wheel. His heart hammered like a sledge hammer inside his chest and his hands felt clammy-cold. What had he done? Yes, what had he done? His carnal heart, in its desire to behold the unlawful... the forbidden... had robbed him of the wonderful peace and joy he'd had when he first found the Lord. And now, by yielding and following the devil's urges and desires, he had caused a soul
whom he might have won to the Lord to turn his back on Christ. What would he answer to God when he stood before Him? he wondered.

Tears flushed from his eyes and ran copiously down his cheeks. He had just helped to damn a soul! Yes, unless he could prove to Joe, . . . once he, Kevin, was forgiven of his own horrible sins and truly sanctified wholly..., that what he had testified to his friend was indeed real and true, Joe would be lost. And he, Kevin Catlett, would have blood on his hands.

In a blinding shower of tears, Kevin started the car and backed out of the parking space. Not far down the third block a familiar figure came into sharp focus; Julie! Julie Kealey. What was she doing in this part of town? And out on a night so cold, too?

Bringing the car to a sudden halt along the curb, Kevin rolled the window down and said, "Get in Julie, I'll take you home. Whatever are you doing, out on a night so cold? And so far from home, too!"

Julie kept walking and buried her face farther down into the folds of her upturned coat collar.

"Get in, Julie," Kevin repeated again. "I'll take you home. What's wrong; you scared of me?"

Turning quickly about-face, Julie answered, "Yes, I am, Kevin. I am afraid of you. Any man who can stand for a full half-hour and more, mesmerized and hypnotized while he looks at magazines that degrade and shame good, morally-clean womanhood, I'm frightened of that kind of man. He's as rotten and degraded as the publishers of those magazines are. I'm sorry, Kevin, but I've lost all respect for you."

Turning piercing, tear-filled eyes on him, she added, "Don't talk to me anymore about Jesus; you're a mockery to Him. If it wasn't for the fact that my grandma knows Him so personally and intimately, and lives every single thing that she testifies to, well, tonight may well have made an atheist out of me. You see, Kevin, watching you literally devour that trash a few minutes ago made me wonder how you could say you loved the Lord Jesus Christ. I wondered why He didn't strike you dead for lying. You don't know and love the same God whom my grandmother knows and loves, that's a for-sure thing. Now excuse me while I hurry on. Grandma needs her prescription and
I told her I'd be right back. You didn't know she lived so close to the Livermore's drugstore, did you? Next time choose an out of town place for your 'looking' rendezvous with those filthy, trashy magazines. But never forget, your life is showing! Now, goodnight."

Kevin sat for a long time, feeling icy-cold fear clutch at his heart. He saw Julie disappear inside a small, neatly-kept bungalow; still he sat. Influence! His influence particularly! Tonight he had lost it with no less than two people. Perhaps, if the truth were known, there may be even more. He had chosen the drugstore away from his home territory to do the "sneak" looking and reading so that no one would know him, but it had backfired. Oh, he should have known better! If only he hadn't listened to the voice of the devil and had fled! He could have been more than a conqueror through Christ. Instead, he had spinelessly obeyed the tempter's voice and became a willing puppet in his hands. And the consequences?

Kevin groaned when he thought of the consequences: loss of soul-peace and joy and rest and loss of influence. He felt trapped. Devastated. So this was how Satan "paid" his followers, he thought -- by robbing them of everything good and pure and noble then turning them out on the trash heap of shame and remorse and laughing at them! What a fool he'd been! Yes, what a fool was he, Kevin Catlett!

Sudden determination rose up inside his being. Quickly he pulled away from the curb and headed the car toward the church. He may have fallen to the bottom in his backsliding but a fellow didn't need to stay on the bottom. No indeed; not when he could find his way back by confessing his sins, repenting of them and forsaking them, he reasoned anxiously.

Gripping the steering wheel fiercely-tight, Kevin settled some things in both his heart and his mind. First and foremost was the fact that, regardless of the cross or the cost, he would seek holiness of heart and life until he knew he was completely dead to self and alive unto Christ and was sanctified wholly.

Never had he known the pure rapture and glorious freedom from inbred sin about which his parents had testified and lived by actual word and deed and example every minute of each and every day. Yes, immediately upon having the joy of the Lord restored to his soul and becoming converted, he would seek after holiness of heart until he was a happy finder. That would do
away with his double life. But then, true salvation settled the sin question in one's life, he knew; sanctification took away that bent to backsliding.

He could scarcely wait till he reached the church to pray. It may take Joe and Julie a long time to have confidence in him again . . . if ever! . . . but this time he meant to do business with God for keeps..., for time and for all eternity.

Parking the car in front of the church, Kevin ran up the steps, through the doorway and down the aisle to the altar . . . to change his way of living.