He climbed steadily before the road leveled out, then for miles and miles the car traveled across the rough and rugged countryside. For the first time since her departure . . . her Homegoing . . . the man felt like one released from a state of unreality. His gaze roamed the countryside with increased pleasure, noticing anew the wide landscape: the far-flung hills, the low bushes and short spiky grasses and the rocky outcrops whose outlines
were deceptively softened by green and brown lichens. The distances met
the sky in a soft lilac-blue haze. Suddenly he left the wild ruggedness and
started a slow descent downward, the mountains hedging the road in on
either side.

The road down was steep, his progress slow, but once down, it was but
a short distance over twisting roads until, through a break in the trees, he
saw a glimpse of the coastline. Just a glimpse . . . of reddish-brown cliffs,
green-topped, and a crescent of deep blue water beyond. His heart seemed
to skip a beat. Home! He rolled the half-whispered, half-audible word around
on his tongue savoring both the sound and the meaning. A few minutes later
the road emerged from the tunnel of trees and became the main
thoroughfare of a small town hardly more than a sizable village.

It was a gentle gardening-market town perched on the shores of the
green-blue waters. Immediately his body relaxed . . . his mind too . . . as he
became aware of its peacefulness as though, like a contented kitten, it lay
purring in a comfortable lap. The tidy houses wore clean faces, and the
windows winked in the morning sun as though they knew something he
didn't. What the man did know was that he was glad to be coming home. He
had gone away after her passing, trying to adjust, wanting to forget -- as
much as such a thing was possible. One just never forgot, not totally nor fully.
And as the hurrying wind of early spring bowled him along the one busy main
street, he smiled to himself and savored the sweet taste of normality.

The man drove till he came to a certain side street and the neat,
yellow-shuttered cottage. He got out of the car quickly and turned the key in
the door. There was a homey, homely sort of atmosphere about the place, a
warmth akin to those days . . . those times . . . when she was there, when her
very presence made the house a home -- a heaven in which to live. He
walked briskly into the kitchen and came face to face with Thomas Matthew
David Washington. The lengthy name befitted the man: he was very tall,
extremely broad in the trunk, and appeared to have been hewn rather than
sculptured. In his heavy, bulky patterned sweater and loose, brown corduroy
trousers, he seemed huge and fierce as he turned from the steaming tea
kettle and faced the man.

"I knew you'd come back," he said kindly.
The man stood and stared, disbelieving but thankful. Thomas Matthew David's hair was black and thick. There were faint laughter lines at the outer corners of his eyes which were so dark a blue as to look like agate, and an unexpectedly sensitive mouth was set above an uncompromising, square chin. In all, and to those who did not know him especially, he gave the impression of an arrogant, determined and distinctly forceful personality; yet his voice, once one heard it, was deep and pleasant and he was exceeding humble.

The man swallowed. A lump came into his throat. For a brief moment it was as if she were there in her kitchen in the form of T.M. David who, unlike her petite, diminutive form, had the same good, humble spirit, meekly-gentle attitude and bearing, and handsome good looks as his equally black-haired sister.

"She told me before she died that you'd perhaps leave the place for a while," Thomas Matthew related softly. "Asked me to look after the house till you returned and to do my best to try to be here to welcome you . . . when the pain subsided and the hurt healed slightly. Every day I've kept my vow to her: came here faithfully, checked the windows and doors, cleaned and dusted after a man's fashion, and put the tea kettle on for boiling. Gives a house a homey sort of lived-in feeling, a steaming tea kettle does. Could you do with a cup? I was just making myself a cup of spearmint herb tea. Brings her kinda' close, you know."

Tears sprang to the man's eyes. He nodded assent. He supposed that everyone who knew the Lord Jesus Christ in an intimately-personal way could look back and point to some one individual who, or instance which, had helped them to take the major step forward or turned an important, eternity-centered corner in their Christian experience. For him, the man standing by the stove was God's instrument, God's special agent in bringing him to Christ.

He remembered the first time he met Thomas Matthew David. They were employed at the same place of business; an office suite. T.M. David, as he shortened his name, talked openly and freely about his faith in Christ. He had an infectious enthusiasm for Christ and His power to save completely from all sins and to sanctify wholly the entire man . . . body, soul, mind and spirit. It got a grip on the man; he couldn't shake it nor get away from it. Consequently, he made his way to a mourner's bench and was gloriously converted, being sanctified wholly shortly thereafter.
Then he met her. Thomas Matthew David's gentle, Spirit-filled sister. They fell in love and were married. Spent ten wonderful years together, they did. Happy, joyous, God-honoring, Christ-Glorifying years of both living Christ and testifying and witnessing for Christ. Their life had had but its beginning when she was called Home.

The hurt was deeper and more painful than anything that had ever happened to his heart. His company had transferred him to a distant place. The hurt was still there. Always, it went with him. One day, while in prayer and Bible reading, God gave him a glimpse into the life of another holy man who cried out from the innermost part of his being, "Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest." (Psalms 55:6).

As he continued reading, he found the secret that would heal the hurt, assuage the pain: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." (Psalms 55:22). He had cast it, literally upon His Christ. And now he was here-back in the small seaside town, and home.

"Sugar and cream?"

His brother-in-law's voice roused him from the past, out of the storehouse of memory and remembering. "Neither, thanks," he replied, savoring the warm, good feeling of being home: in his house, where her belongings still remained neatly-folded inside drawers and hung behind closed closet doors as if waiting her arrival home. He must do something about this, he temporized sensibly now, being able to think about it without the old familiar stabbing pain to his heart.

They sipped their tea together in silence for a while, the man sitting in his usual place at his table, the brother-in-law in her chair across from him.

"You home for good? to stay, I mean?"

"For good, T.M. David. I learned many lessons while I was gone. Invaluable lessons. One in particular: God in His infinite love and wisdom 'giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater, He sendeth more strength when labors increase . . . '
"The Almighty has made me exceeding tender through suffering; He has lighted a flame of unusual joy in my spirit and by the comfort wherewith He has comforted me, I have learned more of the art of consolation. 'Twas good for me, this suffering; this night of mourning and of deep sorrow. It has drawn me closer to my God. I want to go to her grave. I'll report for work Monday morning, the Lord willing. Something about Easter and the resurrection . . . " His soft spoken sentence trailed poignantly.

The brother-in-law, fingering the handle of the cup, nodded, saying understandingly, "Yes, there's something about Easter and the resurrection. His resurrection. Well, run along now. I'll have something for you to eat when you return. She'd have wanted it this way. It may be from a quick-food's place but it will be something hot, I assure you. Let's see, you always liked sea food . . ."

The man stood to his feet. Going to his brother-in-law, he put his hands on his shoulders. "Thanks, T.M. Thanks much. It was nice to have you here to welcome me back."

A brisk, brittle wind whipped in from the sea as he headed toward the little stone church and the cemetery at the edge of the town. The sun, however, shone warmly in through the car windows, and in scattered groups on equally-scattered lawns bright yellow, pink and purple crocuses displayed the Easter finery with which God had clothed them. It was as if the brave little flowers, bright harbingers of spring, defied anything that hinted at winter. The man saw it all, his senses finely attuned to all things around him. Especially so because he was home.

He parked the car in the church parking lot then walked to the cemetery which snuggled up to the end of the church lot. From the top of a budding maple tree a robin greeted him lustily with its sweet, melodic song. Not far away, in a soughing pine, a dove cooed mournfully to its mate. He walked carefully, with bowed head, feeling like he was on sacred ground.

He came to her grave then and wept. To his right, beside her, was the small grave of their only child. Two of them gone, he thought, and both in Heaven.

He knelt on the grass between the two graves in the cool stillness of the trees, feeling that he was in the presence of God. He wept the silent tears
of the bereaved, lifting his head and hands heavenward, drawing in strength and courage for his tomorrows without her. He became suddenly aware of a Presence. It was as real as though He were standing in bodily form before him. "She is not here," the Voice said gently-sympathetic. "This is merely the shell in which she lived."

The man opened his eyes. Tears fell in great profusion now. But they were tears of supreme delight and thanksgiving and joy.

Dropping a tender kiss on each grave, he stood to his feet, the place a sacred thing, the two plots the vestibule of Heaven. "Thank You, my wonderful Lord!" he said. "Thank You."

Reverently he walked back to the car and got behind the wheel. The Presence seated Himself beside the man. He was too blest . . . too happy . . . to move. He laughed. He shouted. Now he knew how that other one felt when she had gone early to the garden. Yes, now he knew. By the mere mention of her name . . . "Mary" . . . she knew! And now he too knew the glory, the power, and the meaning of the resurrection: "She is not here . . . "

He started the car and toward home. He went with him. The man's heart burned strangely warm. "'Because I live,'" he quoted softly-aloud "'Ye shall live also.'"

This was the meaning of Easter, he thought, as God's Comforter, the Holy Spirit, bathed his heart in healing balm and a soothing oil.