She snipped the roses carefully, long stems on each one. Each one a beauty. A prize-winner: buds perfectly formed and shaped; open just so far but not too far nor too much; color hues and shades, subtle. Elegant. She held them out before her sighing over their exquisite beauty and the satin-velvet of their petals. Then she drew them gently to her and brushed the satin-velvet of their petals. Then she drew them gently to her and brushed
her lips over the coolness of their early morning freshness. How delicate they were! How deliciously-delightful was their perfume! She would like them. Yes, she would.

With unsteady steps she started up the mulched path toward the neat Cape Cod which she called home. Beneath a canopy of green-leaved trees, she walked; along a border of azaleas, hibiscus and altheas, while mocking birds sang and warbled above her and a brook, not far away, laughed and murmured joyously.

She pulled the roses gently to her, careful not to crush a leaf. Nor a petal. They must be perfect. For her. Only the best would do. Nothing less.

She paused to survey the garden. It was lovely. Maybe it was lovelier than ever. Yes. Yes, it was. Her eyes told her so. Had flowers ever bloomed so profusely before! Everywhere she looked, there were flowers. And birds. Hummingbirds and more hummingbirds. They loved the garden: the azaleas, petunias, verbenas, the honeysuckle.

Charlie was a perfect gardener-handymen, she mused silently, inhaling the woodsy fragrance of the freshly-spread pine bark mulch. Her garden was weed free and carefully landscaped. It was clean. Like her house, clean. She was satisfied with the young gardener's work. She trusted him. And why not? He had earned her trust. Her confidence.

She smiled as she made her way to the cobblestone walk leading to her back door. Yes, she actually smiled. It came easy, too, like it was the right thing to do. The natural thing to do. And it was. Yes, indeed. Since two days ago. She had had something to smile about. She couldn't help it now.

She entered her carefully-kept and spotless house then took care of the still dew-kissed roses. Next she made sure her hair was neatly in place and that there was no pollen on her nose from the myriad flowers she had stooped to smell. Then she stuck her head around the door frame where Mary, the maid-cook-housekeeper, was dusting the solid cherry dining room suite and, still smiling, she said, "I'll see you sometime this afternoon."

"Do you know what time?"

"I can't say, Mary. I'm going to pay a visit on Matilda."
"Matilda!" Mary's hand flew to her chest in utter disbelief and shock. "Did you say Matilda?" she asked.

"Matilda, Mary. And don't look so shocked, child, It's about time I go, wouldn't you say?"

"I . . . I don't know. Not after the 'explosion' she had the last time she was here. She was 'madder than a wet hen,' as the saying goes. And you do remember what she told you, don't you?"

Again she smiled. "Yes, I remember. How could I forget? But, Mary, since two days ago, well . . . ."

"You've changed, Mrs. Brady. Yes, indeed. Since two days ago, you're changed. And . . . and pardon me, but I like the change. I really do. You're different to work for."

"In what way different, Mary?"

"In all ways. But especially, you like my cooking now. And believe me, Mrs. Brady, I haven't changed a smidgen from the way I've always cooked for you; I use the same spices and/or seasonings, the same excellent cuts of meat, the same sauces, the same vegetables and teas. Everything, the same."

"Thank you, Mary, for that compliment. You humble me. Yes the change is in me. On the inside. This is why I'm going to see Matilda."

"But she told you never to come to see her. I heard her. With my very own two ears, I heard her! And you're going? I mean, really going?"

"Yes. Really. I must. It's selfish to hoard or keep a good thing. The greatest joy and blessing comes in sharing."

"Your . . . roses? Are . . . you taking them to . . . to . . . ."

"Matilda. Yes."
"But you never allowed anyone to cut your roses. Not even one. And now . . . you . . . Well, look, you have cut a bouquet. A big bouquet. And for Matilda at that! You really are changed."

"And so happy that I am. Or, I should say, so happy since I'm changed. Why don't you go out into the garden for a bit of relaxation yourself I've worked you pretty hard, Mary. And you've been faithful to the core. That should be your middle name, Faithfulness. A light salad and some of those leftovers will make us a delightful evening meal."

Mary gasped. Then she smiled. "Thank you, Mrs. Brady. Thank you kindly," she replied as her employer left on her mission. She would work harder than ever to please Mrs. Brady. Love acted that way. Yes, love worked and did for others simply for love's sake. It was so very elementary, she thought. Always she had done everything she did for Mrs. Brady because she loved her. Now, love was a reciprocal thing. This made it doubly delightful and pleasant and wonderful.

Walking sedately down the tree lined, leaf-shaded sidewalk, the fragrant roses carried carefully in one hand, Mrs. Brady prayed. Nothing elaborate nor lengthy; a simple from-the-heart prayer. The one of a dozen or more which she had prayed since two days ago. Prayer could travel where she couldn't, Charlie had informed her. It could unlock doors which otherwise could and would otherwise never be unlocked. That included hard hearts, the young gardener had declared. "It is now the most powerful weapon which you possess and own," he told her after he had helped her pray through to a true and radical heart-felt born again experience. And she had been using her new God-inspired weapon, too. God could go before her to her sister's house. Yes, He could through the wings of her prayers.

Her heart smote her when she remembered how utterly trifling and small the thing was that had brought about their separation. For five years they had lived on the same block, with almost identical Cape Cod houses, and they hadn't spoken one word to each other. To an outsider . . . an onlooker . . . they were total strangers, never having known the other lived or existed. How sad, she thought now as tears formed in her eyes. How very sad.

She had let too many days pass without making contact, she decided, hurrying a bit more now. And today would soon have passed, too. Whatever
this day held for good or evil would soon be woven into the inevitable pattern of life. She would never be able to recall one unkind word nor retrace one foolish step. The tapestry would be woven. How sad that she hadn't realized this before.

She may look at the pattern and regret the threads of selfishness, the lines of indifference, the raveling of hate, but she could never remove them; they would be an integral and lasting part that held together the weavings of today.

She may search the tapestry for a thread of human kindness, may look in vain for a touch of love and beauty to give color to the drab design, but unless she wove them into her gleanings of this day, she could never again add them, for this day -- today -- would have passed.

By God's grace and help, she would, she resolved, seek to weave a lovelier pattern, as He offered her fresh strands of hope and love and a clean and empty loom. There would be nothing of the black of hate now, less of the gray of care, none of the brown of selfishness and the purple of jealousy and strife. Instead, there would be the gold of truth and righteousness and love, the blue of trust and confidence and the shimmering white of faith and peaceableness.

She would now throw open wide her heart to all of God's truths and His precepts, open her mental blinds so there may be reflected upon the loom more of the sunshine of cheer and hope. Not for herself only, but toward all mankind. Matilda especially. She would focus upon the beauty and the beautiful instead of the ugly, upon harmony and not discord. This day -- today -- marked the beginning of a new piece of tapestry on a clean loom, where she was concerned with her sister and their entangled relationship.

She reached the far end of Matilda's lawn. She stood and stared in shock. The grass needed to be mowed, the dead flowers to be removed from bushes, the paths needed mulch.

She forgot that her steps were a bit unsteady, that her joints ached and her feet hurt. Forgot it all. Hurrying up the path like it was a matter of life or death, she pushed the chime button. She always did like Matilda's door chimes. They reminded her of a stately, elegant, exquisite grandfather clock chiming its deep, beautiful chimes at the far end of a distant hall.
She heard a faint footfall inside. She waited. A bit impatiently, perhaps; but she waited nonetheless. Then the door opened. Wide.

"Natalie! Natalie!"

"Matilda! O Matilda!"

They were in each other's arms, each taking the blame. Each weeping. Each asking forgiveness.

"What do I smell?" Matilda asked, drawing away a bit.

"Oh Matilda!" Natalie Brady exclaimed. "Your roses! I forgot about them. Here. I picked them especially for you. My very best. My prize winners. They . . . they're crushed."

"They're beautiful, Natalie. Beautiful, like you. Oh, I'm so thankful you've come. You look different. You're happy . . . ." And she put the roses in her finest china vase.

Brushing tears from her eyes and off her cheeks, Natalie said, "Yes. I'm changed, Matilda. That's why I've come; to share with you the joy of knowing Jesus in saving grace and forgiving power. My gardener . . . ."

"I need one desperately, as you can well see."

"We'll see what Charlie can do to help you until you can get a good one, Matilda. But back to Charlie; he told me I was a sinner in need of a Saviour. Oh, he told me so many wonderful things, Matilda! I can't remember them all. But this one thing I know; I'm not the same person I used to be. I'm changed, and I'm new in Christ. You need Jesus, my dear sister. We're not young anymore and . . . ."

"I know. I know," Matilda said, weeping softly. "I think about this often. And I . . . I'm scared. What's out there? After death, I mean?"

"For me, it's Heaven and eternal life since I've been born again."

"Do you really, actually know this, Natalie?"
"Without any shadow of doubt, yes. I know it. I know right now, this moment, that if I should die, I'd be Home with Jesus my Saviour in Heaven."

"Show me the way, Natalie. Please, help me. I want to know."

"Then pray, Matilda. Tell the Lord Jesus what you told me. I'll pray for you too even though it's all so new to me. Maybe I can't say anything great and profound, but God hears me. And He answers my prayers. I guess that is all that matters."

But Matilda barely heard what Natalie said. She was making contact with Heaven in her simple, childlike way. And with child-like humbleness and faith, she was re-born, made new in Christ.

It was a shouting Mrs. Brady who called Mary and said, "Set an extra plate on the table, dear. For Matilda, especially."