INTEGRITY'S DAY

By Mrs. Paul E. King

(Chapter 1)

Did you ever have the proverbial butterflies in your stomach? And did your knees ever feel all rubbery and shaky? Well, if you did, and if you have, then you know how I felt.
I guess everyone feels a little bit nervous when he (or she) goes for a job interview. But, well, I guess this interview had me unusually excited and full of butterfly feelings.

I gave myself another quick once-over (in the mirror), made certain that my hair looked neat and was in place, then I hurried down the stairs and into the kitchen.

"Gretchen called," Mother told me. "Said she'd call again in a few minutes. I told her you had been having your private devotions."

"That is my bulwark of strength, Mother," I answered.

"Are you nervous, Sonya?"

"Yes, I am. But I'm excited, too. What a combination of emotions!" I exclaimed.

"That's not unusual, dear. And believe me when I tell you that God is going before you. I have such a blessed assurance in my heart that this is God's will for you at the present."

I ran to Mother, threw my arms around her neck and kissed her dear, tired looking face. "You're the most wonderful mother in the world," I remarked brokenly. "Honestly, Mom, I don't know what I'd do without you. You're always saying the right words at the right time. No wonder Job said, 'How forcible are right words. . . .' But I don't have the job yet."

"You will."

Mother's words were so positive that I couldn't doubt in the least that I would be hired. I knew that whenever she spoke with that certain note of finality that she had prayed through on that circumstance or thing.

I looked into her face, hugged her again, then said, "Thanks, Mother dear. I believe you; for I have faith in the God Who answers your prayers. Mine, too. I wish I could get over these horrible jitters. Oh, there's Gretchen calling. . . ."

I picked up the mouthpiece.
"Hi." Gretchen's soft voice came across the line like velvet.

"Hi Gretchen. Mother said you called a while ago. Sorry I wasn't available just then. But how are things going for you today?"

"Fine, like always. The Master is a good man to work for, Sonya. Not only does he want the very best out of me, but he is also extremely complimentary with work well done, and according to his nature of perfection."

"I have 'butterflies' flitting in every niche and corner of my stomach, it seems."

"Aren't you excited, Sonya?"

"Very much. But nervous, too. Like I said to Mother, it's quite a strange set of emotions."

"Not really, dear Sonya. I had the very same kind of emotional feelings when I came to work for Mister Huntleigh. Sometimes I think the very name, Huntleigh, sends fear into some people; namely you and me."

"They're so very wealthy," I said, expressing the reason for that fear.

"But wealthy people are human beings like you and I are," Gretchen replied softly. "I'm excited for you. I just know that he will hire you for Madam. I've spoken highly for you, and about you. And Sonya, I've been praying for you, too. Well, I'll have to get back to my desk. The chauffeur will be coming at what time?"

"Within forty-five minutes, Gretchen. And what does a poor person like me do, when he steps out from his side of the limousine and tells me to get in? Oh, I'm so nervous!"

Gretchen giggled softly then she said, "He won't just tell you to get in, Sonya; he'll open the door, motion where you're to sit, and bow you in, being very; very careful to hold on to your elbow ever so lightly while you make your entrance into the thickly-padded, well-carpeted royal blue limousine."
"I hope I'll grace my special seat like one of the Madam's grand ladies," I said nervously.

"Just be yourself," Gretchen answered sweetly. "You are every inch of you a lady, so cast that obnoxious worry out the window."

"But what if I'm not 'suitable'?" I've never had special training for this job. You had super-good training on the computer. And at typing and business work also. You're a computer whiz."

"Just brag on me, Sonya!" Gretchen exclaimed pleasantly. "But listen to who is talking about a computer whiz! You were right up there at the top yourself, dear friend. The only difference is that you were forced to drop out because of finances when your dad died. I must get back to work now. But I'll be praying for you. And, Sonya, you're going to get that job. Today! I feel it when I pray."

"Mother said the same thing. Thanks, Gretchen. Thanks much. Pray that these flutters inside my stomach will wing their way out before this interview takes place."

"Will do. God bless you. . . ."

I put the receiver back in place then stood thinking. It was through my closest friend, Gretchen, that I was scheduled for the interview with Mr. Huntleigh. Because of her special talent and expertise on the computer, and in computerization, she had been hired by the wealthy man some months ago. His wife had lost her special cleaning lady (through a quarrel, Gretchen said she had overheard her employer confide to a friend).

Mr. Huntleigh, in desperation one day, had turned to her and asked if she, Gretchen, could recommend someone to him; someone who knew "How to do thorough cleaning." (His words, so her friend had told her.) And now, here I was, waiting for the chauffeur to whisk me away to the Huntleigh mansion for an interview with the master himself.

I heaved a heavy sigh. Why should I fear? I asked my heart. I knew how to clean house, didn't I? Why, for so long as I could remember almost I had delighted in working with and beside my mother where woman's work was concerned. And, for all the long months when my mother stayed at the
hospital to be with her beloved husband, my father, I had been the woman of the house. The sole responsibility of the housework was mine. I had kept the house in the same clean, neat and orderly manner and fashion as my mother always did.

But a mansion! I thought. Where did one begin? Then Gretchen's words about the chauffeur flowed back to me: "He won't just tell you to get in," Gretchen had said, "He'll motion where you're to sit and bow you in.

"Please, kind Father," I cried, "remove these nasty, unwanted fears from me now, in Jesus' name. So many things that we are afraid of, and which we fear, never do happen and never become reality. So remove these, please. For Jesus' sake."

"Are you all right, dear?" Mrs. Ashley called from the kitchen, where she was kneading bread.

"Just fine, Mother. Thanks. I was just praying; asking the Lord to remove these mind-troubling, soul-bothering fears, I read somewhere that when we pray about a thing, or a situation and circumstance, we should leave that intact with God; that we should never again let it trouble us to the point of worry. The writer stated that when we worry we don't really believe God will do for us what we have asked Him to do. And I certainly don't want to be a doubting Sonya. I know the Lord is going to go before me."

"That's why Peter admonished us with his beautiful words of, 'Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.' If we mortals obeyed this to the minutest detail and to the strictest letter of the Never-failing Word, we'd have less stress and hypertension and heart trouble. Worry is a killer. In more ways and more areas than one, my dear.

"Since you know that He is going before you, drop the nagging fears out of your mind the way you'd drop a hot coal were one in your hand, and then begin to praise the Lord for the privilege of this interview, Sonya. Thank the Lord for helping you. Even now, in advance, dear. Worry, fear and doubt, can't remain where praise and thanksgiving reside and abide,"

"O Mother, you are so right. And now I am going to practice it." and I began singing a song of praise to the Lord. In my singing, I became so blest
and happy that the thought of the near-at-hand interview faded from memory like fog when the sun burns its way through it and banishes it completely.

At precisely the hour when the chauffeur was to pick me up, he was there. Mother stood on the porch and, after a quick kiss and an "I'll be praying for you, dear," she waved me away.

True to what Gretchen had told me, Mr. Pomfront, my chauffeur, opened the door, motioned for me to enter and bowed me in, holding my elbow ever, ever so lightly while I sat down in the most elegant and fashionable vehicle I had ever see or been inside of. I need not to have worried about gracing the seat like one of Madam's ladies; the very atmosphere and the correctness and rigidity of the chauffeur's deportment and carriage made it an 'almost spontaneous and automatic thing. I sat with my back held straight, my shoulders erect, and my hands folded very properly and resting in the skirt of the pale green dress which I was wearing.

Mister Pomfront turned the key in the ignition and the giant limousine cruised forward with such ease that could scarcely believe I was riding at all. It gave me mere of a sensation of floating on a marshmallow-soft cloud I wanted to express my sentiment and pure delight but didn't know the properness or the improperness of such a thing, so I said nothing.

I glanced surreptitiously out of the corner of my eye to see if I could, perhaps, "read" the man's mood and venture just some tiny tidbit of conversation, but he stared straight ahead, his eyes upon the road and his thought no doubt there, too. At any rate, the man remained strictly a chauffeur: a mute chauffeur; extremely proper and rigid, fastidiously aloof, meticulously clean and flawlessly dressed in his gray wool suit with striking red epaulets on the shoulders. The same shade of red rimmed the band of his matching gray hat, I noticed. Made to order, I thought silently as we literally and actually floated along the highway toward Huntleigh Acres.

(Chapter 2)

Huntleigh Acres was not at all like I had imagined it to be. In my puny comprehension of what this place would look like, I had visualized a sort of castle set far beyond the visible eye of man from the road, and that was about the extent of my imagining. The interior, I had thought, would consist of
enormous rooms with great, high ceilings and echoing halls lined with abstract, indistinct art paintings. I was in for a surprise.

Mr. Pomfront turned off the main highway, his lone passenger fascinated by the scenery that unfolded with every turn of the winding, twisting, turning mountain road down which the limousine cruised as smoothly as a swan gliding across a lake. The road was paved but narrow, wide enough only to allow for two cars to pass safely. At its entranceway, a sign warning Private let the passersby know that it was not a public road, nor a thoroughfare for just anybody and everybody.

We wound and twisted and climbed. I was ecstatic with delight. The mountain was ablaze with color. Dogwood, both pink and white, seemed to have been dressed out for a beauty pageant on every ridge, crest and hillside. Beneath the dogwood, and growing everywhere it seemed, wild azaleas exploded in a blaze of color: reds, pale pinks, deep pinks, yellows, oranges, salmon and white.

I gasped in awe and amazement, feeling as though my inner joy and delight would explode like the colors had seemed to do unless I could give vent to my feelings and my emotions. I forgot about Mr. Pomfront; forgot about the forthcoming interview; forgot that I was in a shiny royal-blue limousine. I was in the mountain, among the flowers, the trees. And I was alone with God, telling Him how much I appreciated all the lovely things which He had created for my enjoyment. My pleasure. My delight. I was telling Him how much I loved him.

"O thank Thee, dearest Lord! Thank Thee!" I exclaimed aloud as tears of thankfulness and pure gratitude spilled down my cheeks.

I saw a slight movement in the driver's seat and came rudely back to my inside-the-limousine surroundings. Mr. Pomfront glanced my way through the rearview mirror then resumed his original, very proper chauffeur's attitude and manner.

We wound and twisted up the mountain's back while a frothy, frolicking, cascading mountain stream as clear as crystal, and as merry looking and frolicksome as lambs in May, was rippling downward. I had spied the cool looking stream some little piece back but had no idea that we would be following it, or that it would be running away from us, down the very hill up
which we were traveling. I knew that, somewhere above, that stream had its issuance from within the mountain's side. I hoped I would be able to get at least one glimpse of its beginning before it headed downward on its laughing, meandering way. Even now, I felt I could hear the merry ripple of its music along its journey.

Did this very proper man who was taking me to the mansion for the interview not notice God's spread of beauty all around? I wondered. Or were his eyes dull of seeing, as the Bible declared some peoples' ears were dull of hearing, lest they hear with their ears and become converted?

It was possible, I reasoned. And even probable, too, I knew. Then, too, some people never noticed things like birds and flowers and crystal-clear mountain streams. The truth of the matter was, they took these blessings of God for granted and treated them lightly and carelessly; like they were just things that, naturally, should and would be in the world.

The stream was now on the opposite side of the road, and in my enchantment with the flowers and the beautiful coniferous trees, I knew I had missed seeing the bridge over which we must have crossed and passed. But I had no need to wait long; in a very little while I saw that the stream had switched back to my side of the road and, thereafter, it became a common thing to cross bridges and see the stream first from the left side of the road and then the right.

We were climbing; my "popping" ears told me so. The trees seemed to stretch their evergreen branches toward the heavens above. Several times, when the breeze-swaying limbs parted sufficiently to reveal a cloudlessly-clear-blue sky, I thought I saw an eagle soaring high above us. That wonderful scripture verse came to mind then: "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31).

Again, my happy soul overflowed with a heavenly gusher of purest joy and peace and, as before, I said, "Thank Thee, Heavenly Father. Oh, I thank Thee!"

Mr. Pomfront steered the limousine around a long, wide curve and there, in front of us, stood a house such as I had never seen. The mansion!
my silent heart exclaimed, thumping wildly. He drew the car up to a driveway made of red brick and concrete. Against the English Tudor of the house, it looked beautiful and even homely and inviting. The landscaping took my breath away. Beauty. Beauty. All around. No matter which way I looked, nor where, there was beauty. Exquisite beauty, all well-planned, carefully-landscaped and meticulously kept.

"Miss Ashley, your interview."

Mister Pomfront startled me. I had been lost in the world of beauty around me and had failed to hear the chauffeur open the door and get out then come around to my side of the limousine.

"I am sorry!" I exclaimed apologetically, feeling my cheeks burn hot in embarrassment and shame. "I . . . I . . . well, I just never saw anything quite so beautiful. Forgive me, please."

"This way," he said, in his quietly-deep tone of voice as he again touched my elbow lightly and guided me along the side of the house to where an enormous window-filled room jutted out into a velvet-green lawn splashed with flower beds sporting flowers of every variety, description, and color.

I was speechless. Never had I seen anything to compare with what my eyes were feasting upon now. How I wished that someday the Lord would grant me the privilege and the favor of bringing my dear mother up to see it all. She, who had such a very little of earth's material goods and who so much delighted in and loved the beautiful things which God had made and created and fashioned and which my eyes were now feasting upon.

A tiny poodle bounded out from somewhere and began jumping up and down in front of me, wagging its stubby tail fiercely and barking a greeting of welcome, it seemed.

"Oh you dear little thing!" I exclaimed, stooping and gathering the happy looking bit of miniature body and fur up in my arms and cuddling it to me.

Mr. Pomfront looked at me in a manner which I couldn't quite decide was approval or disapproval, pleasure or displeasure, favor or disfavor. But I had no need to worry for in a moment the sliding glass doors opened and a
gentle voice remarked, "I see Mitzi likes you. She's our barometer-judge of character and of people. Come inside, Miss Ashley. I'm John Huntleigh. I see you are right on time."

"I owe this to Mister Pomfront. Thank you. And I am pleased to meet you, sir." Turning to the chauffeur, I thanked him courteously and graciously then I followed Mr. Huntleigh into the most exquisite and elaborately furnished office-library that I had ever seen. The master of the house motioned me to a comfortable chair near the enormous stone fireplace along one wall then seated himself in a chair facing me. Seeing my look of delight, he said, "Do you like this, Miss Ashley?"

"Oh, it's beautiful, Mister Huntleigh. Beautiful!" I remarked softly.

Mitzi, who had settled her tiny apricot colored body in my arms, raised her head and touched my cheek with her little pink tongue then settled down for a nap, secure in the fact that she felt I loved her. I was truly grateful for this tiny creature: I needed her reassurance as much as she sensed my love for her. And, with her resting in my arms, I felt less of a stranger in this fashionable home and, consequently, I was less tense and nervous and was more relaxed and at ease.

Mister Huntleigh looked at me for a brief moment but I knew that in that minuscule bit of time he had formed his opinion of me. Gretchen had told me that he was a shrewd judge of human character and that, generally, he was correct in his appraisal and his judgment.

I hoped that I had met with his approval, for the wages which I would earn would certainly take a load off Mother's shoulders and would ease her financial burden completely and entirely. Father's lengthy and prolonged stay in the hospital had nearly wiped her out financially. But it was worth every dime spent, since without the aid of the hospital's facilities and its round-the-clock medications and professional care, Father would have died months earlier. We were overjoyed to have had him among the living for those six months. Twice, he almost took his flight to Heaven from our home. And each time, after having gone to the hospital and receiving proper medical treatment and assistance, he returned home again. Until the last, final day.

"You are a bit more petite than I had thought you to be."
Mister Huntleigh's words brought me quickly back from the hospital and my mother's great financial needs to the present.

"Is that good or bad?" I queried a bit nervously, adding, "I'm really quite strong for my size."

"Gretchen sings your praises constantly."

There were crinkles of laugh lines around the man's eyes. I liked him. He seemed natural and totally unpretentious. Nothing put on about him.

"Thank her for me," I said softly, with a light bit of laughter following. "Friends can sometimes be so very blind."

"Not Gretchen. She knows character when she comes face to face with it. She has told me well. How old did she tell me you are?"

"Almost nineteen, Mister Huntleigh."

"And you, I remember her saying, would no doubt have had an equally well-paying office job had it not been that, out of necessity, you had to curtail your advanced business schooling."

"That is correct. But God sometimes works in strangely mysterious ways in the lives of His children, so I don't feel badly about having had to drop out of the class, Mister Huntleigh. He never closes a door for any of His children but what He does not, ultimately, open another."

The master of the house cleared his throat. In a husky voice he said, "You have a beautiful attitude, Miss Ashley. Yes, a very beautiful attitude." Then, in a businesslike tone, he added, "But you look almost too fragile to work six days a week cleaning house." Gesturing with his hand, he remarked, "There's a lot of cleaning here. And Madam isn't always the easiest person to please."

"Mister Huntleigh," I said, speaking softly and looking into his eyes, "if you will allow me the privilege of working here, I promise to do my very best at obeying Madam and trying to please her in every way possible where cleaning the house is concerned. My wonderful mother taught me from childhood that anything worth doing is worth doing right. So if it's
thoroughness Madam is searching for, I promise to fulfill her wish to the maximum of my mother's strict upbringing."

He studied my face for a moment; then, with a twinkle in his eyes, he said, "Let's have Hazel show you through the house." And pushing a small button on a nearby table, a voice came over the intercom saying, "Yes, Sir?"

"In the library, Hazel. Miss Ashley shall have a tour of the house, please."

"Coming, Sir. Yes, Sir."

I sat in my chair, tingling with excitement.

(Chapter 3)

Hazel came into the enormous library, wiping her hands on the apron which covered the front of her ample frame. She neither smiled nor frowned but stood inside like some inanimate fixture or object, waiting for the master of the house to speak.

Mister Huntleigh stood to his feet. Coming over to my chair, he touched my elbow in the same light manner in which Mr. Pomfront had. "Hazel is ready to show you the house," he said softly.

I got to my feet, still holding the poodle in my arms.

"Miss Ashley, meet Hazel, our cook," Mr. Huntleigh said by way of introduction.

"I am pleased to met you, Hazel," I said cordially, meaning every word of it.

For a brief moment I thought she was going to laugh at me. Then, like drawing a shade, she became immediately the woman of a few moments ago, neither smiling nor frowning, and looking like some enormous inanimate fixture in the house. "Thank you," she finally managed.
"Begin on the third floor," Mister Hurtleigh said. "Explain her duties and what is expected of her. Call me on the intercom as soon as you have finished the tour."

"Yes, Sir."

She led me from the library into a small hall where an elevator stood waiting to carry us up to the third floor. No sooner was the elevator door closed and moving than she said, "My, my, my! There's no way you'll be able to fill the bill. Madam demands much. Mrs. Skaggs gave it her best, yet she never could quite please Madam. And her with all the rheumatism and bursitis, too! But she worked on in spite of all her aches and pains. Maybe not as fast as Madam expected; but she got the work done. I'll tell you, I felt sorry for her when Madam told her she must let her go."

Not wanting to know the gossip, I switched the conversation by asking, "Where is Madam? I haven't met her yet."

"Gone for the day. Said she'd be back in time to take the evening meal with her husband. They always try to eat breakfast and their evening meal together. The master does the hiring, though, in case you were wondering. Madam leaves all that up to him."

"I think that's nice. I mean, well, God's Word tells us that the man is to be the head of his home like Christ is the head of His church. So it's only right, then, that Mr. Hurtleigh should assume his role as head of this house and make these major decisions."

"Miss Ashley, you're not in a Christian home," Hazel declared. "And frankly, I believe I'm beginning to like you. So I guess I can say 'pleased to meet you' now without straining my conscience. Downstairs, I had a wicked thought about you when I first saw you. Know what I thought?"

"Will it help me?" I asked, laughing softly.

"I'm sure it won't do that," Hazel confessed. "But it's wrong for me to think it and not make it right with you."

"Was it that bad, Hazel?"
"I thought you were a little snip of a girl trying to be smart and get this job so you could go away bragging about the big, fancy mansion you were working in and tell it all around that you worked for the Huntleighs. But I've changed my mind, hearing you talk and taking in your modest way of dressing and your beautiful long hair. You're not like that at all; I can feel it. You're a Christian."

"Yes, Hazel, I'm a Christian. Are you? Do you know what it means to be converted and made new in Jesus Christ?"

"I used to know. But that was long ago. Now don't say anymore or you'll have me squalling my head off."

I reached over and patted her arm gently. Then I said, "I'm going to be praying for you, dear Hazel. And I'll have my mother to pray for you, too."

She looked at me sadly. Then, just as the slow-moving elevator halted and stopped on the third floor, she threw her ample arms around me, hugged me to her and said, "Oh, you're an angel! My dear mother told me before she died that someday, somewhere, God would send someone across my pathway who would arrest my way of living and would help me find my way back onto the shining pathway toward Heaven. But come, I am to give you a tour of this house."

I followed Hazel while Mitzi still slept in my arms. "This floor is for guests, mostly, Miss Ashley. Occasionally, Brad comes home and wants the supreme privacy of what used to be this suite of rooms looking out over the mountains."

I gasped and stood in awe of these beautiful rooms, each beautifully and elegantly furnished in excellent taste. No severity nor coldness here; not in structure, lines, pattern, color or furnishings.

"I suppose Madam chooses the accessories," I ventured.

"The Huntleighs do everything together, Miss Ashley. By everything, I mean things pertaining to the house. They consulted their interior decorator but decided, rather, to furnish and decorate according to their own good taste. Madam was once an interior decorator. That was many, many years ago. This floor gets cleaned every week, but with less care than the second
and first floors. Unless, of course, there are guests arriving to occupy the rooms. In that case, each of these rooms gets as thorough a cleaning as is expected weekly on the other two floors."

"I understand," I said, wondering how soon I could begin working when I was hired. Mother had said I would be. So had Gretchen declared it.

There were eight large and beautiful rooms on floor three, plus five full baths. Brad's suite of rooms consisted of three of the eight rooms plus an enormous bathroom with a sauna. At one end of the hallway was an enormous storage space.

When we got down to the second floor, I felt like the fairy-tale Cinderella supposedly felt. Ten rooms! And each one enormous, airy, light and beautiful, with furniture, fixtures, furnishings, and paintings like I could never have dreamed nor imagined possible. My feet sank into the deep pile of the expensive carpeting and the thick padding beneath gave a buoyancy and a resiliency to every step I took.

I was almost overcome with awe over it all. Each of the ten bedrooms had an adjoining sitting room in it and a connecting bath of matching color coordination and decor. Beautiful!

"I've never seen anything like this," I told Hazel. "Oh, I will enjoy working here and keeping everything spotlessly clean."

"You're quite tiny to take on something so enormous, Miss Ashley. How tall are you?"

"Barely five feet."

"And you don't weigh much over 90 pounds, I'd say. Or did I miss it?"

"You're a good guesser," I admitted. "I weigh exactly 90 pounds, according to the scales in our bathroom."

"My. My. My!" Hazel exclaimed. "Aren't you weak as a flea?"

I laughed at that. "I don't know," I said teasingly. "I don't know how weak a flea is. The only fleas I ever saw were those bothering our neighbor's
poor old dog. And they seemed rather strong to me, Hazel. At least they were
dreadfully pesky and persistent. Poor old Trailer seemed to scratch and bite
almost constantly. I wondered when he ever got any rest."

"You are cute!" Hazel declared, smiling broadly. "And I'm real positive
that I'm not merely going to like you; but I do like you. And, if I wasn't so
afraid that it's too much work for you, I'd surely like to see you take the job."

"It's not too much for me, Hazel. I'm used to work. All my life, I've
worked. It's good for one. This is a challenge for me."

"Then we'll go down to the first floor, Miss Ashley."

If the second and third floors fascinated and captivated me, I was in for
an even greater surprise as Hazel took me through the downstairs, or the first
floor. The formal living room was a showpiece; a thing of such exquisite
beauty and charm that I stood as one mesmerized. From its Steinway Grand
piano to the elegant draperies at the windows and the sparkly glittering
chandeliers, it bespoke of wealth and earthly beauty. Everywhere I looked, I
saw beautiful order and cleanliness and the most elegant furniture I had ever
beheld.

Each room had a charm all its own. I felt, truly, like I was walking
through a fairy-tale house with ever so many lovely and beautiful things in it
until I wanted to run from room to room and just look and look and look.

I pulled Mitzi up close to me and whispered just how excited I was into
her tiny ear. She twitched it in a funny-cute way, half-opened her eyes for
me, then nestled cozily in my arms and went back to her dozing.

The solarium took my breath away. It was far more than a sun porch.
Plants and vines seemed to be growing everywhere. Tall, dark-green plants,
almost touching the ceiling, grew in their enormous red brick/concrete
planters surrounded by shorter, fuller-bodied plants. There was even a lemon
and an orange tree at one end of the sunny room. The delicious fragrance of
their lovely blossoms permeated the atmosphere with a delightful perfume.
On each tree, fully shaped and beautifully colored and ready for the picking, hung the fruit.
I felt like I was in another world; a world of everyday sunshine, of swaying palms and of consistently warm temperatures.

"Oh, Hazel," I exclaimed, "this is so beautiful that I feel I'm going to cry."

"No harm in that," the cook remarked. "I've done it many a time. Especially, since Homer died and I had to move into a tiny little boxy thing called an apartment. Homer was my husband, in case you were wondering."

"I was," I admitted. "Not that it matters, or is any of my business. Then I guess you and I are pretty much in the same boat," I commented.

"How's that?" she asked.

"We're both poor in this world's goods. But I'm rich in spiritual blessings," I added. "And you can be, too. But you must forsake your sins, Hazel, and ask Jesus to come into your heart."

"I know, Miss Ashley." Hazel brushed tears from her eyes. "Now," she said, after she had shown me all through the house, "Madam demands thoroughness. This means that all things on dressers, tables, et cetera, are to be dusted, cleaned, or polished as the case demands. And, too, a thorough vacuuming job is to be done beneath the beds, dressers, chairs, and what have you. Do you follow me?"

I laughed softly. "The only difference between my home and this, is that I'll have many, many, more rooms to clean, Hazel. Mother taught me years ago to clean thoroughly. Window sills and all," I answered.

"Then you should not have a problem, Miss Ashley. I shall call Mr. Huntleigh now," Hazel said. "But before we separate, I want to say that I'm really very happy I met you. And I hope, if you are hired, that it won't be too much on you and your mere 90 pounds. The Master will see you now, in his library."

"Thank you, Hazel. And remember what I told you; I will be praying for you."

Blowing me a kiss, and with tears in her eyes, she turned and hurried away to the kitchen.
Mr. Huntleigh ushered me into the same chair which I had vacated earlier. Mitzi snuggled cozily in my lap and looked from her master, up to me, and back to the man of the house again.

"You like Miss Ashley, don't you, Mitz?" he said, smiling, as he rolled a pencil 'round and 'round in his hand.

The poodle wagged her stubby tail responsively; almost ecstatically.

"Do you think you can manage all the work?" he asked, smiling.

"Oh, yes, Sir. I'm used to working. And it will be my pleasure and my delight to keep these beautiful rooms looking just the way Madam desires."

He studied me for a while. Then a broad smile parted his lips. "You are different, Miss Ashley," he commented. "Like Gretchen. And I know the reason for your 'difference.' Gretchen told me."

Tears shimmered in his eyes. He took his hand and brushed them away. "Excuse those tears," he said apologetically. "It isn't exactly manly to cry."

"I can't see why not," I replied. "Jesus wept, and He was the God-man."

"Thanks, Miss Ashley." Straightening himself in his chair behind the massive desk, he said, "You may begin work tomorrow. It will be on a sort of trial basis for a while. If Madam finds your work satisfactory, we shall hire you on, full time. And now I believe the chauffeur is ready and waiting to take you home. It was a pleasure to meet you. Have a good day."

Mr. Pomfront walked in through the sliding glass doors just as Mr. Huntleigh finished speaking.

"Thank you, kind sir," I said, addressing the man of the house. "And may God give you a good day."

I hugged the toy poodle to me then put her down on the floor just as the ever-so-light touch of the chauffeur's hand touched my elbow.
I was exuberant and oh, so thankful, as we wound down the mountain's serpentine road. Tomorrow, the good Lord willing, I would begin work. I could scarcely conceal my joy and excitement.

(Chapter 4)

I left early for work the next morning, knowing that my little old car didn't have quite as much pickup as the smooth riding limousine had. And, too, I wanted to enjoy the scenery as much as possible. I was greatly excited. Mother and I had had a glorious time with the Lord during our family devotions and this added much to my great joy.

I had no fear that Madam would not find my cleaning satisfactory for, I had had an "inspector" of the strictest order all of my growing-up years. I felt that now it was going to yield the proper fruit and that any satisfactory remarks or comments which, with God's help I was sure would come eventually, would all have to go to my dear mother, who was the wonderful teacher and example.

The day was gold with sunshine; the air laden with the essence of myriad flowers and my heart was singing. I stopped for a brief while midway up the mountain to listen to the musical notes of the merry stream and wept for joy over what my ears heard. Oh, it was beautiful. Beautiful! It was music to my ears. My entire being was singing as I drove away.

I parked my car where I was told to park it by Hazel the previous day, and chuckled to myself as I compared its age and sluggish functioning to the beautiful limousine. Then I walked to the kitchen door and rang the musical bell.

Hazel greeted me warmly this time, saying how happy she was to see me again and telling me that she had tried to pray during the night.

"I'm glad you're early," she told me then. "Madam wants to meet you before she leaves. Besides, you'll have to learn where all the cleaning supplies are kept and what to do with soiled cloths and wet rags; that sort of thing. You'll have a cart to carry everything, of course, and plenty of plastic bags to dispose of all waste and for emptying waste baskets. Now follow me, please."
I was amazed when Hazel led me into a room at the far end of the house to find a virtual storeroom of cleaning supplies and paper products. Shelf upon shelf held everything that I would ever need for all of my cleaning tasks. With experienced hands, she loaded my cart. Everything I would need was on the cart. Everything!

"You will soon learn just what to take up," she said, "and how much of each thing. Of course, Madam always keeps extras of everything inside the cupboard in each bathroom, Miss Ashley . . . soaps, shampoos, air fresheners and tissues. Always check to see that these supplies are not diminished."

"I will, and thanks, Hazel. And, unless Madam objects, or her husband, you may call me Sonya."

"They won't mind; not at all. So it shall be Sonya from now on. Miss Ashley sounded too long for one as tiny as you are anyhow."

"What would you say if I told you my name is Sonya Evangeline Ashley?" I teased. "But that's it, all right. And my initials sound even larger, or bigger, than my name: S. E. A. That spells sea, Hazel!"

"Sounds like you have depth," the cook teased, laughing heartily.

"And it sounds to me like you're happy this morning, Hazel," a voice said from the doorway.

Turning, I saw a slender woman eyeing me. Whether with appreciation, shock or acceptance, I couldn't say; she veiled her feelings and concealed her thoughts perfectly well behind her half-smile and her probing deep-blue eyes.

"Miss Ashley, I take it," she said at length, coming closer to me.

"That is correct," I stated.

"I am Madam. I am pleased to meet you. You are to be the new cleaning woman, I understand. Er, I mean, cleaning girl." She emphasized the girl part.
"Yes, Ma'am."

"It is only for a trial, you understand."

"Yes, Ma'am."

She fell silent now. I felt uncomfortable. Hazel lapsed into her inanimate sort of thing. I raised my eyes to discover that Madam was looking me over carefully, scrutinizing me from head to foot, literally. I knew she hadn't missed a single thing. I wanted to tell her I was glad to meet her but didn't find an opportunity to do so.

"Are you sure you are strong enough for this enormous task?" she finally asked, breaking the silence.

Not knowing what to say, I replied, "I will allow you to be the judge when my trial period is ended, whenever that may be, Madam."

Again she scrutinized me carefully. Then she said, "That's fair enough." In a brighter tone of voice, she said, "Well, have a good day. Today you will clean up on the third floor and work your way down to the first two bedrooms at the bottom of the stairs. No guests are expected for the weekend, so that means you follow Hazel's instructions for cleaning up there." Turning, she walked away, carrying her body as straight as an arrow and holding her head high.

"She's beautiful," I remarked to Hazel. "Like everything else in this house."

"Beauty is as beauty does, my mother used to say. But come, I'll help you get started this first day," Hazel said.

"Thanks, Hazel, but that won't be necessary. I have everything I need right here on this cart. Save your strength and energy for cooking. Who does the laundry here?"

"A special wash lady. She comes in two to three times a week, depending upon how many guests there are, or how few. She does all of Madam's curtains, too, so that means you're not responsible for these things.
All you do is clean. And believe me, this is a full time job. Poor Mrs. Skaggs could hardly drag herself up to go home at night.

"Was she old? And heavy, perhaps?"

"Forty-three's not really old. And maybe, like myself, she could have profited by losing a few pounds. But her arthritis was the culprit. Poor soul! She practically lived on aspirin tablets. Or so it seemed to me. Well, if you don't need me, I'll finish breakfast for the Huntleighs. Lunch is at twelve sharp. More likely than not, it'll be just you and me. I'll have something nutritious fixed so you'll have strength to do all that hard work."

"Thanks, Hazel. That'll be fun. Eating with you, I mean. Just don't prepare anything special for me: I like anything and everything. This is a fact. And I'm sure it will be nutritious, whatever it may be."

"Well, that makes it easy enough for a cook." "Leftovers will suit me fine; if there are any," I told her with a smile. "At our house we don't waste anything that we can use, or re-heat. Well, I'll see you later, the Lord willing."

"Twelve sharp, Sonya."

"Twelve sharp," I parroted as I pushed the loaded cart out of the cleaning supplies storeroom and took the elevator up to the third floor.

A ray of golden sunlight met me as I entered the hallway from the elevator. It splashed its glory and its beauty all over the floor, bathing the hanging vines near the windows in warmth and caressing Madam's flowers that bloomed and blossomed in their solid brass urns.

I started my first day of work in what Hazel called Brad's Suite. What I had viewed only casually yesterday, and in haste, I now saw in its fullness. Touched and handled it, too. Brad's suite of rooms would have been called posh by my generation's vernacular. I preferred sticking to the usage of the adjective elegant, however. It had everything in it that any apartment dweller could wish for. Any exclusively-furnished apartment, that is. Cleaning was sheer pleasure for me and utterly delightful.

In one of the enormous walk-in closets I saw an easel and a palette. Nearby was a canvas. From these objects, I decided that Brad was an artist.
Noticing some exceptionally lovely paintings on the walls, I walked over to where they were and searched for the identification of the artist. Sure enough, in the lower far right corner, I found the name B. Huntleigh.

The sea scapes were unusually beautiful, I thought, as I quickly scanned them. He even had several mountain scenes captured on the canvas. Instinctively, I knew these were painted right from the area in which I was now working. The verandas off two of the rooms gave one a tremendous view of the mountains and the countryside for miles around. The artist had a spectacular view from his third floor verandahs, I reasoned.

Seeing more dust than I had noticed on the previous day, I decided to clean well, so that Madam would find this third floor satisfactory when and if she inspected it, which, I was sure, she would be doing shortly after my departure.

I was shocked and amazed at all the dust and dirt on the carpet and I wondered just how long it had been since this floor had had a thorough cleaning.

Vacuuming beneath the bed, I found an expensive looking something or other. I took it to be a tie pin, or some such thing. The stone within its setting had "fire" to it. I mean that it sparkled with rainbow looking colors when light was reflected on it from certain angles. That it was expensive, I had no doubt.

I looked at it for a moment and held it up for the light to "catch" its stone just right, then I put it on the dresser in the room, making a mental note to tell Madam about it before leaving for home.

I enjoyed the central vac which the Huntleighs had had installed all through the house. It made vacuuming a cinch for me. Especially so since the suction was terrific and picked up dust and dirt almost as soon as the vacuum touched it and came near to it.

I had moved a chair aside and begun to vacuum when I noticed, just in time, too, a roll of bills on the floor. What a careless son this Brad must be! I thought, picking the roll up off the floor and depositing it next to the bejeweled, expensive looking pin, or whatever it was called. Again I made a
mental note to tell Madam of yet something else which I had discovered and found, this time beneath the sea-frost green velour chair.

My work was progressing nicely. I was excited. Being tiny had its compensations, I thought. One could get around a bit faster and quicker and with more agility, too, than if there was an excess of weight.

I was working in the fifth room when I found what looked to me like an expensive piece of lady's jewelry. Since I was free from any and all such superfluous adornment, I couldn't be sure of its value. But, here again, it was the "fire" in the stones that convinced me it was expensive. At least, that's what I had been told by someone in the know one time.

"What careless people!" I exclaimed aloud this time, as I placed the jewelry on the dresser beneath which I had found it and was now vacuuming.

By twelve o'clock sharp, I had finished five of the eight rooms on the third floor and I was seated in the kitchen enjoying both Hazel's delicious cooking and her presence. I mentioned nothing about what I had found but merely stated that I was enjoying the cleaning immensely and that it was going very well.

"I miss Mitzi," I told her. "Where is she?"

"Oh, I forgot! She's in Mr. Huntleigh's library. I was supposed to open the door after he left so she could roam. Well, well, well! Now that's too bad. That poor little thing, all alone in that huge room!"

"Let me go and get her, Hazel, will you please?" I asked eagerly.

"You sure you're not exhausted?"

"Exhausted! Oh my, no! I feel wonderful. I'll be back," I said, excusing myself from the table and hurrying away to the library after Mitzi.

(Chapter 5)

Mitzi remained like a little shadow beside me for the remainder of the day, staying near at hand as I went from room to room giving the place a thorough cleaning. Even though Madam hadn't ordered this for those rooms
on the third floor, my early training and teaching about a thing worth doing being done right came to the fore and compelled me to give it my very best, I was glad that I had done so; I felt better for having done what I knew my mother would have wanted me to do. Again, I was truly thankful for my excellent home training.

In one of the lovely rooms on the second floor I discovered another piece of expensive looking jewelry. This piece was lying behind a waste basket. Of all places! I thought. It seemed absolutely and positively incredulous to me; all these valuable and expensive things on the flood Such extreme carelessness and unconcern boggled my thinking.

But, perhaps, I reasoned, as I carefully placed the expensive looking thing on the flawlessly beautiful solid cherry dresser, wealthy people may feel no need to look out for their belongings and take care of them like those of us who were poor of earthly things and had few material possessions to call our own. I wouldn't know; we had never been people of wealth or means.

One thing was extremely clear to me: it had been traced indelibly upon my mind; never would it forsake me. This was the invaluable lesson taught by frugality and of having little: What things one had were used wisely, dispensed with carefully, made to stretch as far as the "stretch" would possibly allow, taken care of wisely, and made to do and to last as long as there was any "do" and "last." Left in them.

I smiled, thinking of my happy home with its modest hand-me-down pieces of furniture. Until now, I guess I had never given any thought, to the houseful of odds and ends which comprised our furniture. To each of us children, it was beautiful. Every single piece in the house had durability, old though it was, And I loved it all. f polished and cleaned and shined it every, bit as thoroughly as I was doing now for Madam. By taking good care of our furniture, and by not abusing nor misusing it, it had remained in good condition for all the many years of my parents' happy wedded lives together. And, now that Mother and I were the only two at home anymore, I was sure that, God willing, it would see us through a great many years more.

The room in which I was working was positively beautiful. Everything about it looked restful and peaceful. The sea frost green color seemed to have picked up the tonal shade from Brad's chair upstairs and carried it down to this room. When I reported the find of this piece of jewelry, I would inform
Madam that it could be retrieved from the flawlessly beautiful solid cherry dresser top in the sea frost green bedroom on the second floor.

The room, I noticed as I cleaned the window sills, faced an area of the outside which I had not seen yesterday. This view from the second floor, looking into the gardens that fanned out in seeming endless paths of breathtaking beauty, was more like something from the pages of a magazine than anything I had ever seen before.

I gasped and oh-h'ed and ah-h'ed in an almost childish ecstasy of delighted surprise and wonderment and awe. Mitzi, hearing my exclamations of happiness, danced before me and around me on her two tiny hind legs, begging to be picked up. With the polish cloth still in my hand, I stooped and grabbed her into my arms. She was content and satisfied.

I stood for a while, looking out across the expansive lawn, woods and flower gardens. Whomever the gardener was, he certainly had a flair for color and a talent for landscaping. Too, he was a genius at harmony.

The piney woods in itself was beautiful. Its pine needled paths, however, led past and through acres and acres of blooming azaleas, hibiscus, jasmine, dogwood, gardenias and camellias. Everywhere I looked, from my vantage point at the window, I saw beauty and color. Birds seemed to be everywhere and butterflies flitted leisurely from flower to flower, adding their own dimension of beauty and serenity to the scene below.

Among a cluster of pines and low growing shrubs and an assortment of roses, scarlet azaleas, deep pink camellias and flaming hibiscus, stood a lovely gazebo. Its stark-white exterior was a fittingly-lovely addition to the garden, I thought, realizing how carefully and painstakingly each and every thing had to have been planned and formulated to have produced what I was now beholding. I lingered only a short while at the window, not daring to infringe upon my work time. I was hired to work, not to loiter or dawdle, even though it was only on a trial basis, as both Madam and her husband had informed me earlier.

I vacuumed the room and stood, for a brief moment only, surveying the completed task with deep satisfaction. Then I pushed the cart with its trash and refuse and all of its cleaning supplies down the deeply-padded, thickly-
carpeted hallway to the second room on floor two, the last one which Madam had told me to clean for this day.

Like each of the other rooms, this, too, was beautiful. Madam had dared to be a bit daring, I decided, noticing the myriad touches of scarlet complimenting and adding to the subtler shades of the pale, rosy-pink. Not too much, I thought, nor overdone so that the more daring shades overpowered the lesser, more subdued and subtler tones. No, the balance was perfect. And, it was beautiful.

I decided, as I dusted the furniture in the bedroom sitting room combination and cleaned in the enormous bathroom-dressing room, that if the choice were ever mine to make as to which room I would prefer, this would be my very first choice. Ever a lover of pink and rose tones, this room had captivated me when I first saw it yesterday on the tour with Hazel.

I was polishing the solid brass handles on one of the drawers in the bathroom when my eyes noticed something lying on the floor near the long built-in dressing table a short piece away. I finished all the handles, and the knobs on the tub as well as those on the double sinks. Then I dried my hands and walked over to where I was sure I had seen the object, whatever it was. My search seemed futile, however, until I stepped back toward the sinks. Then, light coming in from a nearby window ended my search. Gasping, I stooped down and picked a crystal-clear gem of some sort up from the floor. Who, I wondered, had last occupied this "rose room?" Why, the stone could easily have been swallowed down or sucked up by the ever-hungry vacuum cleaner. Especially so, since the carpet in the bathroom was of a shag type.

Now where was I to put this? I wondered, looking for a suitable place to put the gem so Madam would be able to find it easily.

Since the dressing table had an array of expensive and costly perfumes on it as well as gold and silver ornaments of decoration, I decided the easiest place for Madam to find it would be out in the bedroom on the solid cherry dresser. So, making a fourth mental tabulation and note of my find, I carried the gem out to the bedroom and placed it upon the dresser. What next? I wondered, hurrying back into the bathroom to finish my cleaning in there.
Mitzi ran along beside me as I worked. Every now and then I talked to her. In appreciation, she wagged her stubby little tail furiously. Happily.

I checked my watch for time and saw that I was doing excellently well. I dropped to my knees beside a chair and thanked the Lord for helping me, knowing full well that every good and perfect gift came down from above. Was good health not a good gift? Of course it was. And all of the work which I had been able to do today was only because of Him and His good gift of health and strength to me. Oh, He was so very wonderful to me, and I loved Him so!

I was cleaning the window sill behind the curtains when my cloth brushed the coin off the sill on to the floor. Picking it up, I saw that it was a fifty-cent piece. Something else to add to Madam's "collection," I mused silently, shaking my head and smiling. A child, no doubt, had occupied this room with its parents and playing, or possibly hiding even, behind the curtains, had put the treasured coin down and forgotten all about it. Madam would know to whom it belonged, no doubt, since she would remember who had occupied the room last.

Smiling, I took the coin to the dresser and placed it beside the shining gem, wondering if Mrs. Skaggs had ever kept a record of all the lost items she had found and picked up during her years here as cleaning woman. How many had the vacuum "eaten"? I wondered. Why, if I had run the vacuum under that chair in Brad's room instead of moving the chair and then vacuuming, the entire roll of bills would have been sucked in. And without my knowledge, even.

I felt a surge of fear go through me. Oh, how much I needed the Lord to help me! I realized that I must be very, very careful and also exceedingly observant. At our house, there were no precious gems to get lost, nor pieces of jewelry of any kind, and no rolls of bills to be looking out for when I ran the vacuum cleaner and dusted.

I think that, quite suddenly now, I more fully understood the real meaning of Ecc. 5:12: "The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep." Mother and I certainly had no worries about our few earthly, material possessions and, consequently, we could and we did lie down at night and sleep in peace. Our much-worn carpets neither hid nor concealed gems,
jewels or money. Everything and anything that dropped on to our floors was almost immediately discovered and located. But we did have treasures; only ours were of a Heavenly sort and they would never fade away nor perish.

Tears flowed down my cheeks as I thought about the many wonderful things that were reserved in Heaven for those who remained faithful and true to God and kept "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." So blest in my soul was I that I scarcely realized that my cleaning was finished.

Securing the garbage bags with ties, I loaded everything on to the cart and took the elevator down to the main floor, where Madam seemed to have been waiting for me.

"You made good time," she said as I pushed the cart out into the hallway from the elevator.

"Yes," I replied. "The Lord helped me. And, oh, Madam, before I forget, I must tell you that I found numerous valuable items and a roll of bills as I cleaned." I then proceeded to tell her what I had found and where, ending by telling her where each could be found and in which rooms.

"Thank you," she replied matter-of-factly. "I shall look for you tomorrow morning at the same time." With those words, she walked away.

(Chapter 6)

I was up early the following morning, to read my Bible and to pray. Besides Mother's and my wonderful times around our family altar, I felt the necessity and the need for private devotions. When I left for my second day of work at Huntleigh Acres it was with the dew of Heaven bathing my heart and resting upon my soul.

The drive up the mountain road was made with as much excitement and delight as on the two previous mornings. Since my little old "limousine" had no air conditioning inside its compact body, I rolled the windows down and enjoyed God's free and wonderfully fresh air. What a morning! The soft, warm breezes skipped in and out of the open windows, ruffling the stray strands of hair and whipping them lightly and playfully across my forehead. The scent of fragrant pine floated in with the breezes, smelling deliciously fresh, clean, and wonderful. Oh, I felt so very blest and happy.
Arriving at the mansion, I parked the car and went in through the back door. Hazel greeted me warmly and pleasantly, saying that Madam had left orders for me to finish cleaning all remaining rooms on the second floor as well as the curving stairway that led down to the first floor.

I thanked her and told her how beautiful the drive was coming up the mountain, then I hurried to the cleaning supply room, loaded my cart with the necessary things and took the elevator up to the second floor, calling to Hazel not to work too hard.

The usual sunbeams greeted me warmly as I stepped off the elevator and pushed the cart out into the sunny hallway with its beautiful array of growing plants and hanging vines. Mitzie, who must have heard my voice and come up the stairs, bounded up to me, begging to be picked up.

I gathered her tiny little body up into my arms, hugged her to me, and talked to her a while before telling her that I had work to do and must get busy. Then I put her down. As before, she remained beside me, going with me everywhere I went and seeming to have endless joy in doing it. I loved her.

She had wrapped herself around my heart.

I pushed my loaded cart into the room at the farthest end of the hallway, deciding that I would work my way up the hallway in the rooms on either side of the hall, up to my "rose room," as I had mentally called the favorite room. This was as far as I had worked to, the previous day, following Madam’s instructions and orders.

I felt like I was in a land of enchantment as I cleaned, polished, sprayed, dusted and vacuumed the room. No two rooms were alike; each had its own distinctive beauty and elegance. To me, this made my work all the more delightful, pleasant, and interesting.

I found a penny on one of the end tables near a plush, over-stuffed chair in this first room, also a crumpled-up dollar bill in one of the waste baskets which I was emptying. I tried to smooth out the bill, then I put it and the penny on the dusted, cleaned and polished dresser. No big amount, to be sure; but I would tell Madam, nonetheless.
Mitzi bounded joyously by my side, enjoying my occasional pat on her head and the talking I did to her. Much to her delight, when I was ready to begin work in the second room, I put her on the cart and pushed her across to the room. She seemed a bit reluctant to get out when I needed supplies from the cart, but after a little while she seemed to understand and, happily, she bounded to the floor.

It was in the fourth room, while cleaning beneath the bed, that I spied a man's leather wallet. Dear, oh dear! I thought. Not again! Stretching and reaching as far as I could, I retrieved it from its hiding place then carried it over to the dresser and placed it on its top. Well, one thing was sure, so long as I put everything on the dresser tops Madam should have no difficulty whatever in finding her belongings, or those of her husband's, and their guests. I could just tell her to make her daily rounds to each room and to look on the dressers. Always, on the dressers!

I felt like laughing at my own joke, wondering if these unusual discoveries and "finds" would ever become just another daily, ordinary, happening-thing. Or would I continue to think them most strange? Careless habits, even? Whatever the reason, it was not my business, other than to let Madam know about them and where each could be found. On the dresser!

I laughed aloud now. Mitzi jumped up and down in excitement, thinking, no doubt, that I was laughing at one of her cute antics. I reached down and stroked her, then got back to work.

Day number two passed as suddenly and as beautifully from my grasp as had day number one. So did days four, five and six. Each day brought some new "find" as I cleaned; maybe just a quarter; a vanity case. And one day, beneath a crumpled paper bag in one of the waste baskets, I found a lovely orange, silk neck scarf. Another day, it was a dainty little note book with a richly-padded cover. And, always, each thing wound up on the top of the dresser, where Madam could get them and put them away, or take care of them.

I made my report to Madam at the end of each cleaning day, telling her where I found what and ending with, "You'll find this (or these, as the case may be) on the dresser in the blue room or in the cameo white room." Or in whichever room I had found whatever it may have been. Madam always
thanked me politely, saying, "I'll look for you at the same time tomorrow morning." Then she walked away.

I had not seen the master of the house at all since the day of the interview, and Madam, only a few times in the morning. But always, she was there when my work day was through to tell me that she would look for me the following day. For this, I was glad, since it gave me an opportunity to tell her what all I had found in the various rooms.

Two weeks passed by. Two wonderful and enjoyable weeks. I had taken two excellent pay checks home and given them to Mother, saying, "What God hath wrought!"

She looked at me with tears in her eyes. "You've worked hard for this, Sonya," she remarked. "I'll use only one of the checks to pay some bills. You keep the other one."

"They're yours, Mother," I said. "Use them to help get some needed things. Your coat is dreadfully worn and thin."

"I can't use your hard-earned money, dear." "You must, Mother. This is my order," I said, laughing and hugging her. "You and Daddy sacrificed so much for us. This is another one of the ways I'm saying I love you and I appreciate everything you've done for me. Right now, I don't need one single thing. So these are yours. Every penny, except for the tithe and offerings, is for you."

She cried. So did I; for joy and happiness and true thanksgiving.

A third work week went by. It was like each of the other two, pleasant and enjoyable, but with less "finds" than the previous two.

On the sixth evening of the third week, Mr. Huntleigh himself met me just as I had put the cart and its various and varied contents in each proper place and shut the door behind me.

"Come with me into the library," he said in his softly-deep voice.

I followed him, stopping only long enough to scoop a trailing Mitzi up in my arms and press my cheek against her curly little apricot-colored head.
She was indeed my friend, waiting each morning now inside the back door for my arrival.

I was motioned into a chair near the enormous stone fireplace. Mr. Huntleigh Seated himself in a chair opposite me.

"Do you like your work?" he asked, looking at me with a half-smile on his face. "Oh, Sir, I love it!"

"Would you like to be our permanent cleaning lady?"

"Oh, Sir, I'd love it. And I'd thank God for it. And you, too."

"I think Madam would like a few words with you now."

I looked up from Mitzi to see Madam standing at the far end of the room.

"Come here, my dear," the Master of the house said, motioning for his wife to join us near the fireplace.

Madam walked toward me with the grace of a swan. She looked more beautiful than I had ever seen her, I thought.

I stroked Mitzi's soft, curly coat of hair, wondering what Madam would say.

She sat down in a chair close by me, not saying anything but never taking her eyes off me. After a while, she said, "You are a most unusual young woman. Rare! Yes, very rare. Your kind, I mean. So trustworthy and honest, you are."

"Th... thank you, Madam," I stammered. "I am a Christian. All true Christians are honest and upright and trustworthy."

"I tested you, tempted and tried you. From the greatest to the least, I tried you. The jewels never tempted you; nor that roll of bills. Know how much was in that roll?" she asked, looking me full in the face.
"No, Ma'am, I don't," I answered truthfully. "I picked it up off the floor and carried it immediately over to the dresser. It was none of my business how much was there."

"There was almost one thousand dollars there," she told me. "Since you were honest and trustworthy in the larger, greater and more valuable things, I thought I'd see how honest you were with lesser, smaller things. The penny, the quarter, and the fifty-cent piece were returned just like the expensive things were. Also the scarf and the note book. Trustworthiness was my number one priority for a cleaning woman. Dependability was number two. You passed both with unexcelled excellence. Each item beneath the bed, chairs, etc., which you discovered and found, proved to me that you were a thorough cleaner. Each was put where it was, by me, to prove your integrity and your honesty and, also, to see how thorough you were in cleaning. And how careful, too. The dollar bill and the scarf could easily have been thrown out in the rubbish, had you not been careful. As to the gem and the jewels; they are genuine diamonds. Well insured, of course. And now that you are my permanent cleaning girl, I think you should know that we are completely happy and satisfied with your work and with you. There are added bonuses and compensations also. We will discuss these with you at a later date."

"Oh, how can I ever thank you properly!" I exclaimed. "You are so kind. May God bless you. I shall be praying for you both."

Hazel hugged me, when she learned that I had been hired. "And to think that I was worried that it would be too hard on you!" she exclaimed.

"Or that I was weak as a flea," I teased, as we laughed together just before I got into the car and started for home.

All the way down the mountain, my heart was singing God's praises. The Lord needed lights to shine in His world: I would try my best to be His special light at the mansion. Integrity had its day. The door was now open. They had hired me. I would shine for Jesus.

(The End)