Haley Spencer pressed the accelerator and the sleek-looking red sports car sped like a jet down the long driveway. The 18-year-old, her jaw set in a determined line and her knuckles showing white from their strong hold on the steering wheel, breathed loudly and heavily, as if trying to exhale the anger from her heart.
"Must you drive so fiercely, Haley?" Grayce Abbot asked, pushing her petite form hard against the plush cushions in the car. "You frighten me when you get angry. And honestly, Haley, I do think you're being a mite too-too supersensitive. Why, if I had a father and mother like you I'd. . . ."

"Oh, cut it, Grayce! If you had a father and mother like I have, you'd boil too. 'Be home by 11, Haley! Watch your driving! Don't go with that Bailey boy. Church tonight, Haley.'" The irate girl mimicked sarcastically. "I'm sick and tired of hearing what I can do or can't do," she exclaimed fiercely. "According to the laws of our land I'm an adult now. Eighteen glorious years old!" she ejaculated, momentarily taking her hands off the steering wheel and flinging her arms outward in a grand flourish.

"Haley, watch the road!" Grayce screamed, squeezing farther back against the seat cushions and closing her eyes tightly.

"Scaredy cat! I'm watching the road. Relax. I have everything under good control."

"Well, you scare me when your temper flares. And as I was saying, you don't know how thankful you ought to be -- having parents who care about what you do, who you go with, what time you get home and. . . ."

"I'm tired of being bossed!" Haley declared flatly, leaning forward over the steering wheel and fixing her eyes intently on the black ribbon of road ahead of her. "Today I'm going to do something about it. . . ."

"Like what?"

"I'm coming home only when I'm good and ready to come home, that's what."

"Do you think. . . .? I mean . . . well, what about your conscience, Haley?"

"What about my conscience!" the 18-year-old exclaimed sarcastically.

"Well . . . ." Grayce stalled momentarily, searching for the right things to say. Choosing her words carefully, she said, "Things used to bother you, Haley. Don't they do that anymore? I remember when you were really
sensitive about anything wrong. That's what I meant about your conscience. It . . . it . . . hasn't ceased functioning. . .?

Haley's agitation was obvious; the color drained from her face and her anger flared white-hot. "For your information," she stormed, "It's none of your business." And she pressed the accelerator fiercely.

"Sorry to have offended you," Grayce apologized, watching the speedometer zoom up to the 90-mile mark. "It's just that I always admired and respected the Haley I first knew," she said. "And by the way, are you ready to meet God? Because if you're not, you'd better slow down; you're doing 90, Haley."

There was a long pause and Haley, sitting forward on the seat and staring fixedly out the window, set her jaw in an even more determined line. "Since when did you get religious?" she asked with sarcasm.

"Ever since you first talked to me about my soul, I've been doing serious thinking, Haley. The way you used to be -- and live and conduct yourself -- was beautiful. Beautiful" Grayce said softly, a look of deep longing in both her voice and in her eyes. "You were so different then, so unlike the girls and fellows I knew."

Taken aback by what her friend said, Haley's foot eased up on the accelerator.

"Why did you change?" Grayce asked suddenly, her serious, dark brown eyes probing Haley's face. "You used to tell me such wonderful things about God -- you even said that He was coming back to catch those away who were ready to meet Him. Is that true, Haley? Really and honestly, true? You didn't make it up, did you?"

"Of course it's true!" Haley snapped, annoyance registering plainly on her face. "And you know I didn't make it up," she added. "Now let's change the subject and talk about something else. I don't care to think about those things anymore. My entire life's ahead of me and I mean to begin living it to its fullest. If my folks don't like it, I'll get an apartment and live my life exactly the way I please. I have a good job and I mean to. . . ."
"But, Haley," Grayce interrupted, "you'll not be happy. You can't be happy -- not after you've experienced what you told me you did. And believe me, there's sorrow and heartache ahead for you. I know."

"Look, Grayce, I came to get away from being preached to, and if you can't talk about something more down my line, I don't want your company."

"I'm sorry, Haley. But it looks like you and I'll be trading places. Please take me home."

"And what do you mean by that statement? About trading places?" Haley asked harshly, pulling into a side road and turning around.

Grayce sighed. Bright tears glistened on her long eyelashes. "I mean to find the Christ you have turned your back upon. If that is true -- about Him coming for His saints -- I'm going to get ready and be one who goes up. Ever since you first told me about this, I've been praying. Today, I'm staying in my room until I know He resides in my heart."

"Suit yourself," Haley said lightly, taking a shortcut back to town. "The church door's always open, in case you want to go to the altar," she mocked as Grayce stepped out of the car.

"Oh, thanks for telling me, Haley," Grayce replied, sweetly. "I'll go to the church. God always seemed near to me those few times I went there with you. And do be careful, Haley. You're living dangerously. By God's grace I'm going to be There. Today I'm going to do business with God."

For answer, Haley shifted the sports car in gear and raced away.

The ancient town clock in the bank's tower struck two deep, resonant tones when Haley parked the car in front of her parents' home and started up the sidewalk to the front door. Lights shone out from the living room and the upstairs hall and bedroom.

Clenching her fists and gritting her teeth in anger, the girl turned the door knob. Why did her mother always wait up for her? She fumed as rage and anger boiled up within her. Sure, she was three hours past curfew time, but she planned it this way.
Flinging the front door open wide she said loudly, angrily, "Now don't go asking me where I've been, Mother, nor why I've disobeyed and am so late; I'm 18 now and I'm going to do just as I please."

Stepping inside and closing the door, Haley looked around the room. It was empty. Her mother wasn't waiting for her like she always did. Strange, she thought, hurrying to the lighted kitchen.

Haley started toward the door to turn off the light located conveniently on the wall near the door frame, when she saw something that startled her. Her hand flew to her heart and she gasped in astonishment. In a little heap, between the door and the kitchen table, were her father's clothes -- the same clothes he had worn to work that morning. No, yesterday morning. It was now past 2 and this was the beginning of a new day. But what were her father's clothes doing on the floor? He was always so methodic -- so meticulous -- about seeing that his clothing was hung neatly inside the closet, on hangers. But these looked like they had just dropped off his body and fallen on top of each other--the shoes on the bottom, then trousers and underwear, the shirt and tie. Underwear!

Frightened now, Haley ran back in to the living room. "Mother," she called. But the only sound she heard was the grandfather clock as it gonged out the half-past two hour.

Still clutching her heart, she started for the stairs. She stumbled over something and looked down to see her mother's Bible on the floor. Near the Bible lay the unfinished afghan her mother had been working on, the crochet hook a short distance away. Beside the Bible and afghan were her mother's clothes -- shoes, hosiery, undergarments, dress and apron in that order.

Panic washed over Haley like a giant wave. What did it mean? What could have happened? Picking up the Bible, the girl's eyes fell upon a passage of Scripture on the open page: "Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" Matt. 24:44.

Dropping the Bible, she rushed up the stair steps to where the lights burned brightly in her parents' bedroom. Everything was just as it had looked when she left the house -- the bedspread lay smooth and wrinkle-free on the bed, just as her mother had always kept it, and the bed had not been slept in.
"Mother! Father!" she called loudly, sliding the closet doors open and looking inside. Everything was absolute neatness and orderliness, like always.

She raced to her own bedroom and turned the lights on--Nothing! No one! The guest bedroom the same.

Haley broke out in a sweat. Her mind felt ready to snap and break unless she could find her parents. Grayce! she thought quickly. She would call her best friend.

The phone rang and rang and rang -- she would just keep letting it ring, she decided. There was no answering voice on the other end of the line. It was maddening. Maddening! the girl thought, recalling Grayce's words about doing business with God and going to Heaven.

In desperation Haley rushed down the stairs and out to her car. She would go to the church, she decided. Grayce was still there -- seeking, no doubt.

A single light, up near the altar, shone through a window of the church as she brought the car to a screeching halt near the doorway and ran up the few steps to the inside. "Grayce," she called, more loudly than she had meant to. "Grayce. . . ."

Walking down the aisle toward the altar she let out a wild scream. "No! No! No!" she wailed. "Not you, too! It can't be. It can't. But . . . but . . . it is! It did happen! O Grayce! O . . . God!"

Rushing to the altar and throwing herself across its tear-stained penitent form, Haley screamed, "I missed it! Missed it! The rapture!"

Beside her, in the same order and fashion as she found her father's and her mother's clothing, was another pile . . . Grayce Abbott's clothing.

"Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not" St. Luke 12:40.