Sherri lifted tear-filled eyes to the familiar things in her room and scarcely able to take in the full meaning of her father's words, she dropped her face in her cupped hands and sobbed bitterly. It couldn't be true, she thought, feeling like she was living in an unreal world.
She wiped at the fastly-falling tears, and through the hazy mist she walked to the window and looked out on her familiar, much-loved world. She had known nothing other than 325 Maple Lane. She was raised here, all seventeen years of her life. Her father and mother had brought her home from the hospital as a baby to the house on Maple Lane. Her roots had gone down deeply those years. Her world pivoted around and in 325 Maple Lane. And now, suddenly and without warning, her roots were going to be torn up and transplanted. To Alaska, of all places!

She ran from the window and threw herself across the bed, sobbing as though her heart would break. How would she ever fit into that land of ice and snow and utter frigidity? How? She was not an Eskimo, nor would she ever be one. And she was certainly not a winter person. Oh, she liked winter all right; winter, as she knew and experienced it at 325 Maple Lane. But not an icebox winter such as she had read was the norm for Alaska. To her, Alaska was a geography lesson, enjoyed but not desired; a state within her own United States but a world all its own, completely isolated, ice-locked and frigid.

She heard her mother moving about in the living room, taking things from the tables and wrapping them for packing and shipping. Her heart slithered to the depths of despair and into the slough of despondency. "Oh, Mother," she wailed softly into her hands, "how can you do it? How?"

Was her mother not hurting on the inside? Was her smiling face a facade; a cover-up for the pain and deep hurt she was feeling? Sherri wondered.

"Anywhere with Jesus I can safely go; Anywhere He leads me in this world below. . . ."

Sherri lifted her head and listened to her mother. She was singing! And she seemed happy while doing so! Oh, how could she be happy? Didn't she realize the changes that were facing her? And didn't it bother her that their dear, old, familiar house was going to be sold to . . . to strangers?

"Anywhere with Jesus I am not afraid. . . . " The singer continued joyously, working steadily away.
Sherri sat up on the bed. It was incredulous! Her mother actually sounded happy and full of joy as she sang the song. Was it really real, that ring of complete happiness in her mother's sweet contralto voice?

She rushed from the bedroom and was soon in the living room. "Oh, Mother!" she cried. "How can you sing and . . . and sound so happy? I . . . I feel like I'm going to die. I don't want to move. I don't!" Sobs shook her slender shoulders.

"Why, Sherri, that's not the way to feel," her mother consoled, wrapping the teenager in her arms. "God opened the door in Alaska for your father. And anything that God opens is bound to be good. He said, ' . . . No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.' We belong to Him, and this being so, He has something good in store for us."

"But Mother, Alaska! What could be good up there? Ice and snow and glaciers and more ice and snow and glaciers. Year in, year out, an icebox. And what about a church? Will we even be able to get to a church?"

"I'm sure we will, Sherri. If your father can go to work day after day, I'm sure we'll be able to get to church. After all, they do have roads up there, honey."

"If one can call oozing mud a road!" Sherri answered quickly. "I read . . . and heard . . . that the Cassiar Highway is little more than a 300 mile stretch of oozing mud, and the travelers on this highway have one flat tire after another. And we'll be going on this road to get to where Dad's new job is. Oh, Mother, must I go? Couldn't I stay with Grandma Piersen? Or . . . or even with Grandma and Grandpa Devonshire? They'd be happy to have me."

"I'm sure they would, Sherri, but you belong to us. We must stay together, as a family. Neither Grandma Piersen nor Grandma Devonshire is physically able to keep you, dear. With Grandpa having had that stroke, Grandma has all she can do to care for him."

"What if we never see them again?" Sherri cried. "Oh, Mother, I don't want to leave here. Please, must I go? I'm sure I could stay with some of my friends."
With a stern voice, Mrs. Piersen said, "You are going with us, Sherri. Now get some boxes and begin packing the things in your room. You may take everything in there. Wrap your breakable and fragile things carefully; then, just as carefully, put them into the well padded boxes. Tape the lids on tightly and mark the contents somewhere on the outside of the lid. God is in Alaska just the same as He is here on Maple Lane. He has many surprises waiting for you. And for all of us. Now stop thinking of what you're leaving and begin wondering what's waiting for you in Alaska."

Sherri hurried back to her room. With a heavy heart, she carried a half dozen boxes into her room and began the painful task of packing: Tears fell into each box that she filled and taped and marked. It was the most painful experience of her entire seventeen years of natural life. She was sure she would never live through it. But she did.

The long trip to Alaska was pleasant but tiring. The scenery was breath-taking and awe-inspiring, and in spite of her feelings of loneliness andaloneness, Sherri discovered, interestingly, that many things which she had read and studied about in geography were now reality for her. In itself, this was something exciting to write about to her grandparents and her friends back in Maple High and at the church.

The first flat tire along the much talked about Cassiar happened before they had traveled far on it. Sherri watched her father as he slipped the over-size coverall outfit over his trousers, shirt, and sweater and began the miserable task of taking care of the flat tire, which sat in a recession of oozing mud that resembled cocoa dissolved in water.

She looked away from her father's bent-over manly figure. Tears stung her eyes. Already she could see the splatters of liquid "chocolate" on his face and coveralls and she knew that by the time he was finished, he would look more like a human chocolate sundae than anything else. She hurt inside for him. Her father, always so extremely meticulous and well groomed, coming home from his job at the office looking as clean and neat as when he had told them good-bye in the morning, now looked much like a hog wallowing in the messy mud.

Who made the mistake in their move, God or her father? she wondered. Then, ashamed of her passing thought about God being in error, she cried out in her heart for forgiveness. God was not in error. Not ever! If
there was a wrong decision or a mistaken leading, it was on her father's part, not God's, she knew. And why should she even think that her father may have been mistaken in moving his family to Alaska? Hadn't his wise judgment and sound leadership as head of the family proven to be correct and right in all the years of her life? Sherri felt ashamed of herself for allowing the thought to have disturbed her. There were many things in life which one had to accept, sight unseen; this was one of those things. And there would be countless more, she was sure.

Her father finished the messy, muddy job, slipped his mud-covered work gloves and coveralls into a garbage bag ready to receive them, to wait for washing, and soon they were on their way. A serious minded Sherri observed her father and mother with deep admiration and awe; not a word of complaint or grumbling escaped their lips.

After four flat tires and many long hours of tedious driving through one pothole after another, they reached their destination, beautifully pristine, with mountains and nature all around them. Sherri walked through the house like one in a daze. She felt lonely and alone. Frightened, too. The adequate house was situated in a thicket of birch trees surrounded by dense conifers and myriad hardwood trees. They were alone; there was no house within miles. She would travel via bus to get to and from the school, located in the same town where her father's employment was.

The days went by in a blur of tears and unpacking of boxes and when her room was finally finished and each familiar object and piece of furniture was in its place, Sherri stood back, and in astonishment, smiled. It was beautiful. Truly and honestly, beautiful. Even far more beautiful than her room was at Maple Lane. The room was three feet longer and two feet wider than her room was at Maple Lane and the added length and width gave a spaciousness to the room which she hadn't had before.

She looked through the bedroom window and saw a moose munching peacefully and contentedly on low branches in the thicket. She gasped in amazement. Running down the hallway, she took her mother by the hand. "Come!" she cried excitedly. In awe, they watched. More things of interest to write to her grandparents and friends, she thought, feeling a thrill of something or other fill her being.
Her father resumed working a week after they were settled in and Sherri, away from the hubbub of city life and city activity, found herself being attracted more and more to the great, wonderful outdoors. She spent hours alone in the woods surrounding their house, reading the Bible, praying, and communing with God. Never in all of her life had she felt so close to God. Her roots were going down deep, in Christ.

Her mother and she found berries growing wild, and together, they picked them and canned and froze them. The kitchen smelled fragrant with fresh-baked breads, some chock-full of wild cranberries and nuts. They canned and froze salmon caught in a nearby river and enjoyed exciting times of paddling a canoe as beavers nearby slapped the water with their tails.

"Oh, Mother," Sherri exclaimed one day as they were canning salmon, "I . . . I love it here! In a way, it seems like I have always belonged here. God knew all along what was best for me. I . . . I've grown spiritually. In my loneliness, I ran to the Lord for comfort and for help and He was always there, waiting for me. I've never loved the Lord more than I do today. And Mother, I love you and Daddy more than I have ever loved you. Working together, like we have been, has drawn me closer than ever to you. I love you, Mother dear."

"I love you, too, Sherri. And, only yesterday, I was thinking how much closer we have become since moving here."

"I moved in and among my circle of friends at Maple Lane," Sherri explained. "I loved you very much, Mother, but never like I do now. Back at Maple Lane Carmen, Katie, and Holly shared and knew my secrets; now it is you. And Mother, I like this new set-up, and our way of living. I'll make new friends, just as you said I would. Already, two of the girls at church have told me how happy they are that we moved here. Best of all, I've learned a lesson; God is everywhere. He doesn't restrict Himself to anyone's Maple Lane."

Mrs. Piersen hugged Sherri soundly, saying, "Now you are really growing up! And now, let's finish these salmon. I'll have to tell your father we don't need any more for canning."
Sherri giggled softly. "But Mother," she said, "you know that won't stop him from going fishing. Daddy's a different man since we came here: more relaxed and under less tension and pressure, it seems."

"It's been good for all of us, Sherri. I guess we can say, like David, 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.' I know what the solitude and quiet of our surroundings has done for me and for my soul, and your father has said the same. It's easy to listen to God when one gets quiet before Him. I'm thankful to God that we moved."

"That makes three of us!" Sherri exclaimed happily. And, from her heart, she meant it. She never sat on a glacier's blue ice back at Maple Lane; nor did she ever watch mountain sheep pick a trail along a rocky ledge nor see herds of caribou tinted by a setting sun. She was home. She loved it. Like her mother, who sang while packing, she too could say, "Anywhere with Jesus I can safely go; Anywhere He leads me in this world below."