Arlis looked up and down the street, trying to make sure that no one was watching her. It was sneaky of her, she knew, but it was the only way she could do it and get away with it, she thought. Besides, Jinny wasn't poison. Not in the truest sense of the word, that is. So what if she dressed different and looked different and did things which some people thought were
different and "far out"! She was a person, Arlis reasoned and argued with her loud-hammering heart. A people person just like herself.

She heard Mrs. Bunty calling the twins in from the yard and knew it was 6:30. At precisely the same time every night, Mrs. Bunty called the children inside, where they were bathed and readied for bed, given a nourishing snack, read to and played with by both Mr. and Mrs. Bunty, then kissed and tucked into bed with love and prayers at precisely 8:30 o'clock.

Arlis liked the Buntys. They were super-good neighbors and, Like her parents, they were Christians; real, genuine and sure-enough Christians.

She heard Mrs. Bunty call her a cheery greeting and in as calm a manner as possible, she waved her hand in response, trying to act like she was merely out for an evening walk.

"Beautiful evening, isn't it, Arlis?" the neighbor remarked as the twins, Bonnie and Bobby, came hurrying gleefully and lovingly to their mother.

"Sure is, Mrs. Bunty," Arlis replied, hoping her voice didn't sound too shaky and nervous-like.

"How about a bowl of buttered popcorn with us? It's freshly popped -- not more than five minutes ago, Arlis."

"Thanks, Mrs. Bunty, some other time, maybe. OK?"

"We'd love to have you. You're alone, aren't you?"

"Just till nine o'clock, Mrs. Bunty. The pastor wanted Dad and Mother to go into City Hospital with him to pray with someone they've known for many years. He's terminally ill, Dad said."

"So I understand," Mrs. Bunty answered. "And he's not a Christian, your mother told me. It would be horrible to die and not know one's sins are forgiven, Arlis. It pays to be ready to go -- at all times!"

Arlis felt her body shake and tremble. She made no reply. She hoped she was far enough away from Mrs. Bunty so the woman couldn't see her reaction to the statement.
"Well, I'll see you, dear. I must bathe the twins now and get them dressed for bed. We don't ever deprive them of their 'parent time,' as we call our nightly times together with each other. We have such good times, the four of us, and the children are growing in the things of the Lord, too."

Arlis felt even more uneasy after Mrs. Bunty had gone inside. She knew she should not be going over to Jinny's house. But she had promised Jinny she'd come, hadn't she? she argued back to her heart.

She looked toward the Buntys' house. She could go in and tell Mrs. Bunty that she'd changed her mind and she would share a bowl of popcorn after all. But then, what would Jinny do? Would she squeal on her the way she'd squealed on Bianca Holden when she cheated on a test? she wondered.

Arlis felt trapped. Strange that she hadn't thought of this before. But she hadn't. All she had thought about was how exciting Jinny was to be with and around. Always, Jinny had the latest love stories to read and the latest, newest, rock tapes to listen to. What's more, Jinny's parents never once restricted her in either what she read or listened to.

Arlis now stood looking at the ground beneath the spreading maple tree under which she was standing and thinking. Jinny's mother seemed an even greater rock fan than Jinny herself was, Arlis recalled. Jinny's mother seemed to go into some sort of trance as she listened to certain rock groups. It had frightened Arlis, but Jinny only laughed whenever she made some comment about it.

"It's Mom's way of enjoying these groups," Jinny had replied as impersonally and casually as though her mother was standing by the sink washing and preparing vegetables for a meal. "Mom's a real rock fan, Arlis. She's into it far deeper than I am. She buys all the latest tapes for me."

"What about your dad, Jinny; does he like rock, too?"

"Yes and no, Arlis. Dad's a good sport; he'll go along to the concerts because he knows Mother's wild about them. Some groups Daddy can hardly stand, though."
"What does he do then?"

Jinny laughed at that question, Arlis remembered. "He does what I do," the girl had answered. "He plugs his ears with ear plugs so the heavy beat won't burst his ear drums, as he says."

Arlis felt fear wash over her now. For weeks she had been sneaking around going to Jinny's house under the guise of going for a walk or just plain exercising. All the while, she was searing her tender conscience toward things that were high and lofty and noble and ideal and opening her mind and heart to a floodtide of trash and garbage and devilishness. Yes, devilishness! Hadn't she listened to one of the Dial-A-Satan Messages which Jinny had dialed and found to be funny-scary? Indeed she had! And she had felt a fearfully strange and evil power through it all. She had had the gumption and the courage to tell Jinny that she would never, ever listen to another one. Never! And Jinny had respected her for it and never again asked her.

Hey! she thought now. Why didn't I take my stand against the vile, immoral love story books and the rock music? Maybe Jinny would have become a real Christian if she, Arlis, had been where she should have been spiritually and would have stood up against these evil things the way she did with the Dial-A-Message from Satan!

Suddenly, Arlis knew what she must do. She had had enough gospel light to know that one could not mingle with and participate in sinful things and get to Heaven. Not ever! Never! A truly born again, born of God, person was different! He lived a separated life from the world; he looked different and he acted different. He was different. From inside out, he was different. And all new inside; old things were passed away and all things were become new. Christ made the difference!

She turned about face and started back to her home. Every step she took seemed to be reminding her that "Evil Communications Corrupt. . . ." "Evil Communications Corrupt. . . ."

She walked into the house, hurried to the phone, and dialed Jinny's number. She would confess to her parents as soon as they got home.
"Jinny," she said brokenly into the mouthpiece when the girl answered, "I won't be coming over tonight. Not ever again, to listen to your tapes and read the stories. Forgive me for falling you, Jinny, and for letting you down."

Arlis' voice broke; she began to sob and weep brokenly.

"Arlis! Arlis! Are you all right?" Jinny asked in an anxious voice. "What's wrong?"

"I failed you, Jinny. Forgive me. I used to be a real Christian. I backslid, and allowed things to come into my life which I knew were wrong and evil and wicked."

"You . . . mean the rock music and . . . and the trashy magazines, Arlis?"

"Yes, Jinny. I'm sorry I violated my conscience and broke over and 'partook of forbidden fruit.' Oh, if only I had never done it! To my grave, I will carry on my mind the memory of some of the things I read and what I heard on the tapes. Don't be angry with me, Jinny: please understand. This is final. My heart feels so heavy, so lonely, without God's wonderful peace and His presence inside. I know a better way, Jinny; a way that satisfies and fills and meets the heart's deepest longing. I'm going to pray until I get back to where I once was: back into the fold of the Good Shepherd. Back to where the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, covers all my sins. I love you, Jinny. I wish you'd turn from your sinful ways and get ready for Heaven too."

"I . . . I don't know how, Arlis; nobody ever told me how. I . . . I never heard anything like . . . like what you just told me."

"I'm sorry, Jinny. I failed both God and you. I should have been a spiritual, guiding light to you. Instead, I allowed Satan to drag me down, and I never did one thing to help you toward Heaven."

"I . . . I'm not happy, Arlis," Jinny said quickly into the phone. "And there are times when I'm terribly afraid of the unknown. I have been so dissatisfied with my life! I'm not happy, Arlis!" Jinny cried again, emphatically. "I've often wondered why I was born. My life seems to have no purpose, no future. Oh, Arlis, maybe you can help me! Maybe you can put purpose and meaning into my life. Please, can you? Will you?"
Brokenly, Arlis replied, "Not I, Jinny, Christ! Come over; I'm a seeker too. Together we'll pray, and He who said, 'Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,' will hear us and meet our souls' deep need."

Weeping, Jinny stammered brokenly into the mouthpiece, "I'm coming, Arlis. Coming. Right now!"