Kent Somers stumbled up on the porch and sat down on the top step, dropping his face in the palms of his hands, feeling totally and completely let down and disgusted. Some friends he had! he thought. Mitzi, hearing the steps on the porch, left the cool grass bed beneath the maple tree and in a single bound was by Kent's side, wagging her little stub of a tail fiercely and nuzzling her cold nose along his arm, hoping for a generous slice of
attention. When she was ignored, she snuggled closer to the teen's leg and whimpered, her eyes, all the while, upturned and pleading for a whispered word of kindness and a gentle pat on the head.

Suddenly aware that the cocker spaniel was beside him, Kent reached out and put an arm around her, then he grabbed her up and held her on his lap. Stroking her head and ears, he said, "I don't know what we'd do around here without you, Mitzi. For sure, you're the best friend I have. And the truest and most faithful, too. You don't cut me off and drop me like a hot potato, the way my so-called friends do. Good, old faithful Mitzi! Know what? Today Judy dropped out of my world. How about that! And I was sure Judy was more loyal than to do such a thing. So I guess you'll be seeing more of me, now that my favorite and special girl dropped me."

Mitzi snuggled close to Kent's chest and heaved a happy sort of contented sigh; then she settled down for a nap, looking for all the world like she could care less what anyone thought of this member of the Somers' household, who meant everything to her.

Kent was so deep in the slough of despond and of self-pity that he failed to hear the approaching footsteps coming down the sidewalk. And not until a girl's soft voice asked kindly, "May I talk to you?" was he aware that he had company, even.

"Judy!" he exclaimed. "What are you doing here? I thought you said you couldn't go out with me anymore? Why did you come?"

"Because I felt I had a Christian obligation and duty to you, Kent. I'm sorry I didn't explain my reason for rejecting you. I have a moral obligation; so here I am. May I sit down, please?"

"By all means, do. Forgive me for not having asked you; that was highly uncharitable and negligent of me and I am sorry. For, whatever else I may not be, no one will be able to say truthfully that Kent Somers is discourteous and ungentlemanly."

"Thank you, Kent. You are a gentleman and, also, a courteous young man. But you have something so obnoxious and distasteful about you until your friends don't care to be in your company. And this hurts me deeply."
Kent felt like the blood was draining from his face and his body. He cuddled Mitzi tightly to his chest, feeling the need for support. She opened her eyes sleepily and lazily, brushed his arm lightly with her nose, then settled down to resume her nap.

A quick glance in Judy's direction revealed tears in her eyes. Kent felt miserably uncomfortable. "What are the charges?" he asked flippantly and lightly, trying to evoke a smile on her sad looking face.

"Oh Kent," she cried, "why do you always make promises when you know you won't fulfill them or carry them through? We can't believe you anymore. You promise, promise, promise. All the time, promise. But rarely ever do you keep or fulfill what you promise."

"Even though I mean to keep them. . . ."

"But you don't, Kent." Judy's tears ran in fast streams down her cheeks. "No one can depend upon you for anything anymore. It's . . . it's like you're . . . lying." Kent was up on his feet. "I'm not a liar!"

Judy raised her eyes to look at him. "Isn't making promises and then not keeping them not almost like lying?" she asked softly and brokenly. "It . . . it's. . . ."

"I'm not a liar!" Kent repeated emphatically as he interrupted Judy.

"But what would you think of me -- or say -- if I promised one thing after another and then never did what I promised I'd do? Oh, Kent, you can't seem to see yourself. You're blind. So blind! This promise habit of yours has blinded you completely. How do you think God feels about it?"

Judy's question exploded like a full-loaded bomb shell upon Kent. "God?" he questioned, dropping on the porch step again.

"Yes, Kent, God! By our words we are going to be either condemned or justified. I feel so grieved when I think how you failed to fulfill and carry through on your promise to see that Mrs. Milford would get her storm door fixed before cold weather set in. This was to have been your project of caring and helping, as set down by our church young people. You weren't asked to do it, Kent; you volunteered. Remember? And you promised Gary Catchett,
our young people's leader, that you'd do it. Why didn't you? If Gary hadn't
gone by to see if Mrs. Milford needed groceries from the store he wouldn't
have known that you hadn't done what you promised. As it was, he did what
you should have done."

"I meant to do it, Judy."

"But again, you didn't. And neither did you go by and get the papers off
the Stanfoes' porch while they were away, as you had promised them you
would do. Amy saw them, still on the porch, the second day after the
Stanfoes left. She gathered the two together and took them home, then made
it her business to get them each evening thereafter. Why can't you do as you
promise, Kent? You're going to lose your soul over this unless you change,
I'm afraid. I believe this would come under much the same heading as a vow
-- promise; vow. And the Bible tells us it is better never to make a vow than to
make one and then break it."

"I have good intentions, Judy."

"But good intentions aren't enough, Kent. Many a man has lost his soul
having good intentions. Why don't you ask the Lord to change your heart? To
forgive you and..."

"Forgive me? I guess I'm as good a Christian as the next person."

Suddenly Kent fell silent. He paled perceptibly. His outburst of anger
was a dead give-away as to the contents of his heart.

Judy got to her feet. "I just want you to know I'm your friend," she stated
kindly. "I didn't mean to infuriate you. But it's better that you know now what's
lurking inside your heart than to be deceived and, ultimately, to be damned,
Kent. I'll be praying for you. I'd like to help you. I want you to change. Bye,
Kent."

With tears rushing from her eyes, Judy walked away; leaving Kent to
himself.

Long after Judy's departure, Kent sat like one in shock. Mitzi opened an
eye lazily, as if to make sure her master was still there; then, in total
contentment, she stretched out full length on the porch and continued sleeping.

Kent's first reaction was one of anger and hostility. The very thought of him being a liar made his blood pressure rise. He had always thought of a liar as someone who would, outright, say something that was not true -- but never, never as anyone who said he'd do a thing then just didn't get around to doing what he said he'd do.

A gentle breeze skipped across the porch. It ruffled Mitzi's red-brown fur and caressed her gentle looking face. She twitched lightly, then slept on. Kent, however, was not at peace with himself; the more he thought about Judy's words the more he realized she had spoken the truth. He was, indeed, guilty of telling false hoods. Basically, after analyzing his real reason for always promising he came face to face with the truth of the why of his promising: he did it, he had to admit now, because he would be the only one in their youth group who didn't. He couldn't bear the thought of being thus exposed.

Sudden fear gripped Kent's heart; fear of facing God someday at the judgment. What answer would he give then? he wondered. None! Absolutely none. God, the great Judge of all the earth, would produce the record -his record -- and he would have to bow his head in shame and hear those awful words, "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity; I never knew you."

The thought was so overpowering and so overwhelming that Kent jumped to his feet and raced into the house to his bedroom. He was guilty, true; but he could change. Yes, even now, he could change; mercy's door was still open for him. He need not be lost and burn forever and ever; not while there was still time for him to repent and to be saved.

He fell to the floor on his knees, sobbing great, deep sobs of godly sorrow and contrition. He would change. Now!

And he did!