The sun was just peeking its shining head over the fringe of gold-pink eastern horizon to survey the wonderful happenings of the busy world when her warm, golden rays got all tangled and mixed up in Auntie Jewel's silvery-white hair as she bent industriously over the long row of tender mustard greens.
A beautiful smile (an "angel's smile," Roy would have said, were he yet living) played across the peaceful features on the face as she thought of her relatives up north. "Oh, Jewel, you can't mean that you eat mustard and turnip greens!" Mildred, an older sister, had once exclaimed. "Who ever heard of eating the tops? Turnips, yes. But not the tops! Ugh!"

Aunt Jewel chuckled softly as the statement rang through her thinking just then. Turnip greens? Yes, and mustard greens, too! And she had learned to love them just like she had learned to love black eye, crowder, and cream peas and the many, many Southern dishes! And why not? Roy had been born and raised a dignified Southern gentleman and she loved this world of warm balmy breezes, pungent with the sweet smell of blooming night jasmine, honeysuckle, and gardenia, as passionately as he had. Her flair for Northern dishes, along with her successful achievements in Southern cooking, was a delightful combination as she and Roy had been . . . the North and the South really mixed well in their case and they always knew they belonged together!

A mocking bird lighted gracefully on the crape myrtle bush in front of her and sang lustily. She straightened up to watch him, a paring knife held firmly between her right index finger and thumb and a handful of tender greens in the other.

"Auntie Jewel." It was Poppy. She stood in the doorway a brief second, clutching a soft, cuddly, stuffed animal tightly in her small chubby hand. Then she perched precariously on the top porch step, her long white gown trailing her dainty white ankles. "Why did you leave me? I waked up and missed you," and quickly the child bounced down the three remaining steps then padded softly over the cobblestone walk to the beloved Jewel.

"Auntie wanted to pray before anyone stirred, Poppy."

"Look! Look, Auntie Jewel, Freckles is being naughty again. He's hiding behind the lattice work. He'll get stuck again."

Jewel laughed softly, remembering how she had to free the curious Freckles only yesterday from the lattice "prison."
"Him gets prettier and prettier," and Poppy laughed with merry laughter and her eyes shone with childish glee. "Tell me how I got my name, Auntie Jewel. Will you?"

Patiently the white-haired Jewel put aside her greens and her knife and led the barefoot child to the porch steps. This was the highlight in Poppy's day and, though she had heard it over and over again and again, she never tired hearing it from her beloved Auntie Jewel.

"We'll sit here where we can watch Freckles and Speckles. They're full of mischief this morning," and suddenly both half-grown kittens ran down the garden path, chasing a downy feather the wind was tossing to and fro.

"Well," and Jewel sighed deeply, her eyes intent on the child before her, "it happened unexpectedly . . . your name, I mean." Always, she had begun the beloved story this way and, always, Poppy's eyes had danced, bright with eager anticipation. This morning was no exception. "Why, Poppy, your eyes look just like the blue morning glories this morning." And Jewel folded her close to her for a brief second. "One night . . . about four years ago . . . I heard a baby cry; real loud, too. She wanted attention, I guess. After all, she had never been in such a big world before. Could it have scared her?"

Poppy snuggled closer to the fun skirt of the one she loved dearer than any earthly being and wrapped her small hands in the folds of the skirt, her eyes never leaving the beloved face.

"Well, as I said, she was wanting attention. And all this happened right here in my big house." And Jewel chuckled softly as she saw the pleased smile on the child's face.

"I came out of my little apartment and tapped lightly on the door.

"'Come in, Jewel,' your daddy said. 'We have a little round-faced, dark-haired girl Her name is Susan Priscilla. Isn't she pretty?'."

"I walked over to the bed and when I looked at you I said, 'Oh, look! Her cheeks are as red and as pretty as a poppy . . . a bright red poppy. I'll call her Poppy. She's my little Poppy. She'll be my comfort, now that Roy's gone' So, from that day to this you have been called. . . ."
"Poppy!" The girl exclaimed with eager delight and glee, "And I like Poppy for a name, Auntie Jewel. When I grow up I'll call my little girls Poppy." And she wiggled closer to the side of the aged woman, happier than ever in hearing the oft-repeated story.

Jewel folded her tightly to her heaving bosom. Soft tears, glistening like diamonds, hung heavy on the silver eyelashes as she again counted her blessings.

Seven years ago . . . seven years, two months and seventeen days, to be exact . . . Roy was taken from her with a heart attack. He left no parting word, but a radiant smile on the dear lips told Jewel all she needed to know. Roy had lived what he had testified to. Often he had said, "My Jewel, God will take good care of you . . . even after I'm gone. He'll send you a blessing in some unthought of way," and it had been true prophecy, indeed.

The very spring that Roy had passed away while she was caring for the tender greens in the garden, she heard the quick footsteps of a man coming down the cobblestone walk toward the garden path. She remembered how she had straightened up and asked politely, "May I help you?"

"I . . . I hate to bother you," the man had faltered, "but my company has transferred me to Wisteria and I can't find anywhere to move. I've been all over town, and even went to Zionsville in hopes of finding something there, but to no avail. Someone suggested that maybe you could rent my family and myself a couple rooms until something opens up . . . there's four of us, my wife, myself, and our two children, Christa Bell and Faye Evelyn."

Without further inquiry or discussion she had led the destitute couple to the house. "So long as Jewel Forthright's living you shall have a place to keep those darling children," she had said.

True enough, the place was big . . . too big for even Roy and her . . . and much too lonely since his death.

"I'll have a carpenter in here tomorrow," she remembered having said. "We'll fix this place over so you'll have the bigger share of it for your living quarters. I'll need only a kitchen, bath, bedroom, and small living room for myself."
Thus it had been, and now, seven years and a third child later, the Rushmores were an integral part of the enormous Forthright mansion. Never was she addressed as Mrs. Forthright but always, Auntie Jewel. Her own request.

Christa Bell and Faye Evelyn were started in school when Poppy made her exciting entrance. Three months after her arrival, Edyth Rushmore was confined to the hospital for weeks with compound fractures of her left leg, hip and pelvis.

"What'll I do?" and Don Rushmore rushed into the clean, neat and cheery apartment of the one who had become like a mother to the young couple. "Edyth's in bad shape," he sobbed, "and the car's a total loss. Who'll take care of Poppy? Can you think of anyone who's trustworthy and good with such tiny creatures?"

"I know the perfect answer," Aunt Jewel had heard herself saying. "The one and only one who's kept her every time Edyth's gone to give her piano scholars their lessons."

"But . . . but Aunt Jewel, it's too much for you. You're not young anymore" Don defended, a look of relief in his tired eyes.

"The Lord sent her to you to comfort my heart. I'll care for her, mother her." And Don had sighed a deep relieved sigh, his look expressing a depth of gratitude he could not adequately express.

Five months in bed and in a cast for Edyth only drew Poppy and Aunt Jewel more closely together. Tenderly, the wrinkled hands bathed, clothed, tended and fed the angel-child who by now had been knit more closely to her than any earthly being and, thereafter, for nearly four years now, Poppy occupied a twin bed in Auntie Jewel's bedroom.

"We didn't pray, Auntie Jewel," and Poppy's sweet voice brought the dear soul back from her heart musings. Her persuasive voice and enormous blue eyes searched Aunt Jewel's face. Seeing tears sparkling on the silver eyelashes the little girl took the long sleeve of her muslin gown and gently wiped the tears, at the same time wrapping her soft warm arms around the aged woman's neck. "I love you, Auntie Jewel," she declared positively.
Thus another new day had begun. . . so like the pattern of each lovely new day for the little girl and the lovely old lady. Always Aunt Jewel had seen to it that the child had Scripture read to her and, having been taught as early as she could remember by her God-sent second mother, her young lips formed many a fervent childish prayer.

Two sunny mornings later the child again perched her dainty pink toes precariously near to the edge of the top back porch step and called her usual calling, "Auntie Jewel, I missed you when I waked up."

Seeing the beloved form slumped over the turnip greens she ran down the familiar cobblestone pathway, calling loudly, "Auntie Jewel, Auntie Jewel, answer me."

Her loud sobs and crying brought both mother and father quickly to her side and ere long Auntie Jewel was rushed to the hospital.

"Must she stay long in the hospital?" Poppy asked, when told that the older woman had passed out.

"Long enough for the doctors and nurses to find out why she passed out, honey," Edyth explained to her daughter.

"Then I must hurry," and with a ball of cord clutched tightly in her chubby hand she rushed outside.

For hours she remained outdoors, every now and then rushing into the bedroom she shared with her beloved Auntie Jewel and, kneeling by the bed of her spiritual mother she trustingly asked the Lord to make her well and to send her home.

"How would my little Poppy like to go to the hospital with Mother?" Edyth asked at noon. "I do believe Auntie Jewel would be in favor of seeing her little girl, too. Doctor Tennyson said you could see her for awhile."

Eagerly the child walked beside her mother down the hospital corridor and when she saw the aged woman she leaped onto the chair and into the waiting arms on the bed. "Don't ever leave me again, Auntie Jewel," she pleaded. "Never!" Then, drawing back to where she could look into the sweet face she confided, "I prayed today . . . just lots and lots of times . . . by your
bed, Auntie Jewel, and I asked the Lord to make you real good again so's you could come home and pray with me; and I asked Him to hold back the spring till you got home. I even helped Him, Auntie Jewel . . . I tied all the lilies shut so's they couldn't open till you got home to see them. You said they'd be open pretty soon an' you an' me was going to look at them together an' you promised me a story on how the lilies keep their nice white color and sweet smell an' I just couldn't let them open up . . . big and pretty . . . and you not home!"

Great tears coursed down Edyth's and Aunt Jewels faces.

"Maybe . . . you'd better teach me to . . . pray too, Aunt Jewel," and Edyth threw her arms around the neck of the older woman. "I've missed a big share of living it looks like. May I join you and Poppy in your devotions every morning?" 

"We'd be glad to have you, my dear, dear daughter!" Aunt Jewel exclaimed joyfully. "Now get my clothes. The doctor released me but the nurses can't find my clothes anywhere."

Suddenly Edyth Rushmore laughed . . . loud and long. "Why, Aunt Jewel, I do believe Don put them in with our laundry. The laundry woman's got your clothes. But we'll remedy that in a hurry," and she rushed down the hallway, to the car, and home.

When she returned Aunt Jewel was making a game out of her pills: "And what color did I tell you this is?"

"Red," the little girl answered excitedly. To her, most everything was red.

"Blue," Auntie Jewel corrected. "You've having quite a bit of trouble with your colors but that will correct itself one of these days . . . when you get a bit older. But come, we must hurry. We can talk and get our colors at home . . . those lilies must be untied. We mustn't hold the spring back a day longer. The Lord answered your prayers, Poppy, and helped the doctor to locate Auntie Jewel's troubles and He's sending me home to be with you a while longer."
"Can we have this . . . prayer meeting as soon as we're home?" Edyth's eyes were tearful, hungry. "I've missed the best part of living," she confessed.

"Just as soon as we're inside the door, dear Edyth," and the dear soul dressed hurriedly.

"Auntie Jewel will show you how to pray, Mama. She taught me how."

Auntie Jewel had taught, this Edyth Rushmore knew, not so much by lip but by godly, holy, consistent daffy living, until not only was Poppy influenced and affected but the entire Rushmore household as well.

The lilies could wait a minute longer . . . till the prayer meeting was over and Edyth Rushmore's heart was at rest and at peace with God! Then the string that two awkward, chubby childish hands had lovingly and innocently tied around them would be cut and they would unfold and spill their fragrance and perfume in the garden and surrounding areas just like Auntie Jewel.

"Hold back the spring!" had Poppy prayed. "Oh, Lord!" Edyth cried aloud, "let it break out over my heart, all through my life . . . the springtime of Thy forgiveness and Thy salvation."