I sipped the hot chocolate slowly -- ever so slowly. My mind was in a whirl. A tailspin, really. I mean a real tailspin. Whatever was I going to do? I wondered, glancing from Grandma to Grandpa, but, mostly, to Grandpa.
I saw him lift his head and focus his pale-blue eyes on me. I nearly dropped the cup I was holding. With trembling fingers, I set it down beside my plate.

"Well, Buttons," he began softly, "what are your plans for today?. Grandma tells me she doesn't have anything really pressing for you and her to do here in the house so I thought a little shopping trip to the new mall might be a good treat for both of my special girls. . . ."

His sentence trailed like the tail of a kite and his eyes never left my face.

"I . . . I . . ."

"Grandma wants material, so she told me, to make a new dress for you. Seems like the upcoming church program's pretty special to you."

"It . . . it's a sort of singing thing, Grandpa," I told him, barely lifting my eyes to meet his and wishing for all the world, that Grandma would stop feeling that I needed a new dress every time anything special came up. She was a professional dressmaker, having done this most of her life. She loved to sew. Her real creativity came to the fore when she was sewing. She made trousseaus that were absolutely beautiful. She had unusual talent.

"Well, whatever it is, your grandmother wants to make you another dress. Now, how soon can you be ready? It won't take your grandmother long."

I felt the color rise up into my cheeks. Then I got cold. "I . . . I . . . well, I can't go, Grandpa. Not today."

Grandpa pushed the last bite of hotcake through the remains of maple syrup on his plate then forked the tasty morsel politely into his mouth and, not until it was swallowed and he had drained his cup of hot chocolate, did he speak. Giving me a long look -- the kind which I had secretly dubbed The Forever Look -- he asked softly, "And why can't you go, Buttons?"

I felt all quivery-nervous. It seemed as though Grandpa and Grandma could look past me, my exterior, I mean, and go straight down into my heart
and see what I was thinking. That was enough to give any young person a case of nervous prostration -- or the quivers.

I loved my grandparents; loved them deeply and dearly. They were the only "parents" I knew; I was barely two and a half when my father and mother were killed in a head-on crash by a very drunk driver. I was spared, completely and totally uninjured and very much alive, when my parents were killed and had to be cut out of their car.

My grandparents took me and raised me as their own. They were God-fearing people with old-fashioned Biblical views and standards and beliefs. I was well learned and instructed in the things pertaining to God and His righteousness and His holiness, and was soundly converted when I was almost twelve and sanctified wholly shortly afterwards.

I kept my head in a bowed position now, feeling Grandpa's eyes "boring" into me. Not unkindly, mind you, but "boring-probing," nonetheless.

"Are you ill?" he asked kindly and softly.

"No, Grandpa, I'm feeling fine physically. It's just that . . . well. . . ."

"Well, what?"

I felt suddenly speechless and tongue-tied. How could I tell him? How?. Then a brilliant idea struck me; at least, I thought it was brilliant. It became an inspiration. Hope bubbled up inside of me like a perpetually flowing and bubbling fountain.

"Look, Grandpa," I said, lifting my head and my eyes to meet his gentle gaze, "you and Grandma go to the mall today. You need time alone. It will be good for you. I'll go with you some other time, God willing."

I saw Grandpa's mouth twitch in that funny little way it always did before he burst out into hearty laughter. And then it happened: he laughed so hard I was sure he was going to either cry or have a heart attack or both. Needless to say, I felt stupid.

"Time alone, huh?" Grandpa said between a new outburst of laughter. "Oh Buttons, pardon me for laughing, but I can't help it. After nearly fifty years
of living together in harmony and love, we need time alone! If my guess is right, and I think it is, I feel it's our little Buttons who wants to be alone. Care to tell Grandma and me why? What's the reason for not wanting to go with us to the mall?"

Talk about smart, that was Grandpa. Grandma, too. Only, being of the same sex as I, she never plied me with as many questions as Grandpa. She seemed to understand me and my feelings and my sometimes-need for privacy and aloneness. Today, however, I had a different reason for wishing to be alone. But how could I tell my grandfather?

If only Josh had waited, or . . . or let me know sooner so I could have contacted him and told him not to come. But I had no way of getting in touch with him now: he should be at our house within the next hour or so!

I shuddered inwardly with the thought. I was excited but anxious, too. Josh and I had met at a recent camp meeting and so far as I was concerned, he was the one. He was not what one would call strikingly handsome, but he was good looking and ever so neat and clean, and smiled most of the time. I guess the thing that attracted him to me and me to him was our mutual desire and total commitment to be at each and every early morning and late night prayer meeting, where fervent and intercessory praying went up to God in behalf of souls needing spiritual help. At any rate, by the time the camp was almost over, Josh and I realized how special each was to the other. And now, he was almost here. At least the letter in the morning's mail stated what time he should be arriving, God willing.

Grandpa's voice sliced right down the middle of my serious thoughts. "Why can't you go, Buttons?" he asked again.

I felt tears sting my eyes. "I . . . I should have told you as soon as I got back from . . . from camp," I blurted, allowing my tears to have free course now. "I met this boy and . . . and. . . ."

"Nothing wrong in that," Grandpa answered in a matter-of-fact tone of voice. "In fact, it's all very normal at your age."

"But . . . but Grandpa, he . . . he's coming here today! I . . . I . . . well, read the letter," I said, hurrying away from the table to get the letter from the
buffet drawer, where I put it after reading it, until I could take it upstairs to my room.

Grandpa laughed softly now and grabbed my hand as I passed him. "Sit down, honey," he told me tenderly. "Neither your grandma nor I want to read your letter: we trust you completely. Now, you say this young man is coming here today?"

"I . . . I'm sorry, Grandpa. I didn't know it until the letter came this morning."

"Sorry? For what? I'm glad: your grandma and I want to meet him. Well," he said, getting up from the table, "I'd better get out to the chicken pen. I'm sure I've never yet met anyone who didn't enjoy your grandma's fried chicken."

"But . . . the mall, Grandpa! You . . . you mustn't stay home because of me."

"We can go to the mall anytime," he replied as he hurried outside.

"Do you like this young man?" Grandma asked in her softly-toned voice.

"I really do," I answered candidly, feeling that I could tell Grandma anything. "I should have told you about Josh," I added, "but I felt so . . . shy about it and . . . and almost like it was too sacred a thing to . . . to tell."

Grandma put an arm around my shoulder and kissed me lightly on the cheek. "That's quite normal, too," she said, adding, with a dimpled smile, "I felt the same way when your grandfather and I met. Oh, but I was shy! Now you relax, honey, and enjoy this day. We'll prepare a chicken dinner, you and I, that will be fit for a king."

"Grandma. . . . "

"Yes, Bethany. . . . "

"Grandpa. . . . will . . . will he. . . ?"
"Ask your young man lots of questions, and cue him in on your strengths and weaknesses? I'm sure he will, honey. That's Grandpa. But we understand him and love him, don't we? He's as gentle as a lamb, my child, even though he seems unthoughtful and rude at a time such as this. But if your Josh is worthy of you, and if he's genuinely in love with Christ, he'll understand. Or overlook this, at the least."

I felt myself "shrinking"; inwardly, I mean. "Let . . . let's pray that . . . that he'll go easy on the question sessions, Grandma," I said.

Grandma laughed softly, then she whirled on her heel and stated, "Oh, my dear Bethany, we have a dinner to prepare. Let's get busy. You'll live through this day and you'll love your grandpa all the more for his unusual tactics. He studies his 'subject' diligently and prayerfully as he listens to the answers he receives. It's his way of uncovering the false and bringing the true to the fore."

"Josh is genuine, Grandma, believe me. He loves the Lord with all that's within him."

"Then relax, my dear, and enjoy every minute of this day. Now let's get these breakfast dishes washed and put away."

I knew Grandma was right, of course; but the anxiety in my heart made me feel miserable and I dreaded this meeting between the two men.

Our dinner was well on the way when Josh arrived in the old car I remembered from our meeting at the camp grounds. His eyes lit up when he saw me and his smile melted the fears and apprehension inside of me.

Grandpa welcomed him warmly but studied him carefully, and as soon as they were introduced to each other the questions started coming; in an easy manner, I must admit. I felt the nagging discomfort of my former anxiety returning so I prayed silently for the Lord to help me to accept, with thanksgiving and praise, that which I could not change. A wonderful peace enfolded me.
"Now you take Buttons," I heard Grandpa say to Josh. "She's a fine young lady; but she has a long way to go before she'll be able to cook like her grandmother.

Why, her pie crust is so tough you could. . . . "

Without realizing what I had done, in breaking into Grandpa's unfinished sentence, I mean, I burst out laughing. Then I looked Josh squarely in the face and said, "And that's every bit the truth: my pie crusts are tough. So tough, in fact, that you can hardly cut them. But with my excellent 'teacher' tutoring me I'm sure this will improve. Right, Grandma?"

Grandma's arm encircled my waist. She winked at me and patted me gently.

"Why, Bethany child, you have improved so much that your grandfather didn't know it was you who made him that last lemon sponge pie, and not I."

It was Grandpa who looked shocked this time "You . . . you . . . mean it?" he asked, incredulous.

"For a fact," Grandma replied, smiling broadly.

"But if you hadn't helped to roll the crust out," I said quickly as I looked at Grandma, "it might have been another catastrophe -- where Grandpa would have had to use that sharp paring knife to cut it again. To remind me just how tough it really was," I added, with a twinkle in my eyes.

Grandpa stared at me for a long while, as though he was seeing me for the very first time ever. Then he smiled and said to Josh, "I can see that our little Buttons has excellent discernment in whom she chooses and allows the privilege of keeping company with her. Yes, excellent and careful 'taste.' Now, Josh, while the ladies finish the dinner preparations, you and I will get better acquainted." And Grandpa led Josh into the living room.

Grandma hugged me tightly then hurried back into the kitchen with me following her. I felt light and joyously free: God had given me victory over my anxiety and fears.
I raised my eyes heavenward and thanked the Lord for Grandpa, knowing that God had used the "turnabout" of his Buttons to make some changes in Grandpa's life too. And suddenly I realized that my kind Heavenly Father would provide all the grace I'd ever need for any and all of my circumstances and trials if I'd only turn them over to Him. Happy beyond any describing, I began singing an old hymn of faith.