Jalynn read the verses over for the sixth time. They were true; she knew this. But . . . but . . . how . . .

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.
"But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14-15).

She stared at the page in the Bible. Ever since she could read -- before first grade, even (her mother had taught her) -she considered Jesus' beatitudes and His sermon on the mount to be some of her very favorite scripture reading. She loved it; loved it so much that when she was nine or ten she had memorized all of Matthew five, six, and seven -- all three chapters. And Mrs. Hartley was so pleased with her that she had had her stand up in front of the entire church congregation and quote the three chapters.

Jalynn now buried her face in the pages of the Bible and wept. What would Mrs. Hartley think of her if she could know how she felt at this very moment? she wondered silently. Mrs. Hartley had been her beloved Sunday school teacher for many, many years. She it was who encouraged scripture memorization and gave out a verse each week to be memorized for the following Sunday's class. She was a wonderful woman; a saint in shoe leather, who taught not only from the Sunday school quarterly but also by her day by day and moment by moment close walk with the Lord.

At thought of Mrs. Hartley, Jalynn felt a sense of shame wash over her. She wept brokenly, asking the Lord to not allow any wrong or evil thoughts and feelings to lodge in her heart, but to please wash them all out, should any have slipped in.

She was so engrossed in her own affairs that she didn't know her grandmother had come into the bedroom. A soft clearing of the throat made her lift her face from the Bible and look up. "Oh hi, Grandma," she whispered through her tears. "I didn't hear you come down the hallway."

Mrs. Schott crossed the room and sat down on the bed beside her granddaughter. Taking her in her ample arms, she drew her close, saying gently and softly, "He's helping you, Jalynn. 'Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might' (Ephesians 6:10). I know it's hard. . . . But God, my dear. Yes, but God!"

Lifting tear-filled eyes to meet those of her grandparent, Jalynn cried, "If I could only forget the cruelty of it! And if, once and for all, I could know in my heart that I do forgive them! Oh, Grandma! Grandma! I don't want bitterness
to find a place in my heart. I pray and plead the Blood of Jesus to keep it out and to not allow even the tiniest bit of it to enter. But Satan keeps bringing up the events of the past that led, ultimately, to Mother's untimely death and, Grandma, it's so hard. I loved her so greatly.

"She didn't deserve what Daddy did to her. How could he do what he did? How? She was such a wonderful person. She was so good to Daddy. And to me. She was real, Grandma; there was nothing false or fake about my mother."

"I know this, honey. Your father knows it, too. And everybody who knew your mother knows that she was a saint. She was a Christian for most of her life, Jalynn. She prayed through and was converted at my knees when she was only seven years old. Then, in a revival meeting at the church, she was filled with the Holy Spirit and was sanctified wholly. This happened four months after she was converted. She was a very devout Christian. As she grew up, she aspired only to one thing, and that was to please her Lord and Master. Her Savior. Yes, she was indeed a wonderful woman; a deeply spiritual woman."

Jalynn wiped tears from her eyes and off her cheeks with tissues from the Kleenex box. Facing her grandparent, she asked, "Is it wrong to wonder why God didn't take Daddy instead of Mother? After all, it is Father who sinned, not Mother. You'd think that the justice of God would demand payment for his sin."

"Don't ever question the doings of God, my dear. He knows why He did what He did. And as for the justice of God demanding payment for your father's sin, well, that is coming: unless he repents and forsakes his sins. But someday and sometime he will pay for his sins God's Word declares it and the holiness and righteousness of God demands it. It is only because of the Lord's mercies that the wicked are not cut off in their sins. God's love is so deep that He doesn't want anyone to perish."

"I know that, Grandma. But you can't imagine how hard it is for me to try to understand and figure out why Daddy did what he did and how he could do such a cruel and dastardly evil thing to Mother. This . . . this woman he has . . . she's a butterfly, Grandma. And Hillary Brockmann, who knows her well, said she chased after Daddy until she got him."
"We don't repeat gossip, Jalynn, remember?"

"I haven't told this to another person; you're the first and only one to whom I repeated it. But I confess that I believe Hillary knew what she was saying. Hillary's a good Christian, and she didn't tell it to me as a gossip tidbit. She was wanting me to not put all the blame on Daddy."

"But in God's eyes he is to blame too, Jalynn. God's Word is full of advice, and promises, on how to overcome Satan and his snares. And, yes, even on how to resist the wiles of a beautiful but wicked woman."

Jalynn's eyes were pools of sorrow and pain as she said, "Mother died of a broken heart, Grandma. She really did. I know Doctor Kissell said it was a massive heart attack. But just before she died, Mother whispered, 'I hurt so greatly, Jalynn. Not a physical kind of pain-hurt; but a grief pain-hurt. Oh my darling,' she cried, as she hugged me closely to her. 'May God spare you of this crushing kind of pain.' Then she lifted my face to look into hers and said, 'Don't get bitter, Jalynn. Whatever you do, don't allow bitterness into your heart. Forgive Daddy, honey. Forgive him. And forgive . . . her too.'"

"'But Mother, Mother,' I cried, "'she broke our home up. She . . . she made a weakling out of Daddy.' And Grandma, she did."

"I think, my dear, that Brice merely brought your father's weakness to the foreground. Each of us have areas in which we are weaker than in other areas, and unless we pray earnestly and consistently for power to overcome the tempter's attacks in these areas, we can fall. God wants us to be vigilant and on our guard. He has made every provision necessary to be an overcomer. Prayer and Bible reading and obedience to His injunction to 'resist the devil,' are antidotes to the tempter and the temptation. ' . . . Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world,' so states I John 4:4."

"Please pray that I will come through this more than a conqueror, Grandma. It hurts so dreadfully when I realize that Daddy's unfaithfulness to my beautiful mother put her in an early grave. But He who has power over death and hell and the grave can give me the power to be victorious over this. Truthfully, this is the hardest and fiercest and most painful thing I've ever faced and encountered."
Patting Jalynn gently, Grandma said softly, "The same God Who has kept you victorious and joyful in your soul for these past ten years, is going to hold you fast and keep 'you in His love and in His tender care through this, my dear. Keep holding on. He abideth faithful: He will undergird you. Only you can loosen the grip you have had on Him. Tighten the grip, honey; strengthen the hold, and keep the 'sacrifice' bound securely to the altar."

Jalynn threw her arms around her grandmother's neck and clung to her like a frightened child. "Oh Grandma! Grandma!" she cried. "I'm so glad I have you! God has been so good to me. Thank you for telling me the things you just said. I needed that: needed it desperately."

"We'll pray together; prayer always helps us to see things in a clearer, brighter light. And it sets the song birds to singing in our heart once again. We'll go down if we look at the circumstances and fail to keep our eyes on the God who has conquered the circumstances for us. There are many, many hurting young people in the theater of life who are experiencing what you are. Perhaps their parent didn't die, like yours has. But they are suffering unbelievably because of their broken-up homes. And the sad thing is, many of these suffering young people and children have absolutely no one to turn to. They don't know about the Lord, so they don't have Him living in their heart to comfort and help them."

"How do they make it without Jesus?" Jalynn asked in amazement.

"Many of them don't, honey. That's the sad thing. But you, my dear, can tell them about the 'Balm in Gilead,' and how Jesus actually and truly heals a broken heart and makes it possible for one to forgive the offender. Now, let's pray together."

Jalynn bared her heart to the Lord. Pleading with Him to reveal anything of an unforgiving spirit to her, she sensed the wonderful presence of the Holy Comforter. Oh the wonder of it all! The glory! Instantly, she knew that her heart had no bitterness. None at all. What she had been feeling and was going through was the pain of the ordeal: The shock and trauma of it all. Together, she and her grandmother praised and rejoiced. Then she knew what she must do. Getting out some stationery and a pen, and praying for Divine guidance and wisdom, she wrote:

Dearest Daddy,
I have had you on my mind and in my heart and I have been praying for you. I wanted you to know that I love you.

I have been praying much for myself, also; to stay on top spiritually. And thanks be to God, He has helped me marvelously and wondrously. Jesus said that if we didn't forgive men their trespasses, neither would He forgive us our trespasses.

I struggled fiercely for a while, lest I had come short in the area of forgiveness toward you and Brice. I realized that Matthew 6:14-15, those right-to-the-heart words of Jesus, were as timely and as up-to-date as the day He uttered them. So I did a lot of praying; a lot of soul-searching, lest I had come short and had allowed bitterness to seep into my heart. Oh, the pure delight, and the bliss and joy to know that my heart has nothing but His Divine love flowing in it and through it and that there is no bitterness at all! None whatever! Blessed be His holy name!

Father, I want you and Brice to know that I forgive you, though my heart has had its deepest and greatest and most crushing heart break ever. As a token of my forgiveness, I will be buying two Easter lilies this week, God willing, for church on Sunday. (I still babysit for the Stollers and the Harmon). One of the lilies will represent my forgiveness toward you; the other will be in memory of one of the most beautiful, purest and holiest mothers ever to have lived on earth -- my mother.

I love you, Daddy, and I am praying for you. And for Brice. Please come back to God.

Lovingly,
Jalynn