Ted tiptoed past his sister's door. Lately, she seemed almost like a stranger to him. They once had a truly great, Christian, brother-sister relationship. Not anymore. Kimberly seemed like a snapping turtle, snapping at him for anything and everything he asked or said to her. He couldn't understand her; positively not.
He heaved a sigh of relief when he was past her door. While she didn't greet him upon his return home from his after-school job at Barletts' Fruit Stand neither did she snap at him. That was something, even though he did miss her once cheerful voice that always welcomed him with, "Hi Ted. Have a good day today?"

He sneaked up behind his mother and covered her eyes with his hands, teasing her with, "Guess who, Mom."

Mrs. Seaforth spun around and, laughing, she grabbed Ted's arms, saying, "You're quite a boy! I love you."

"And I love you," Ted replied. Then he sat down on a kitchen chair and sighed.

"What was that for? The reason for it, I mean? Are you tired, Ted? But of course, that was a stupid question, wasn't it? Why wouldn't you be tired after a full day in school then working for five hours? Something's bothering you, isn't it?"

Ted nodded. Nibbling on a celery stick from a dish on the table, he said, "I can't figure out what's happened to Kim. Mom, she's just downright awful. What's eating her? She's not even civil to me anymore. I sure hope she's nicer to Andrea and Andrew than she is to me. With this work schedule of mine after school, I'm not around to see how she's behaving toward them; they're usually in bed by the time I get home."

Mrs. Seaforth reached for a carrot stick from the dish. "Truthfully Ted, your father and I can't figure her out these days, either. She's uncommunicative and . . . and as edgy as can be. I've tried desperately to reach through to her; to break down the wall she's living behind, but to no avail. She refuses to tell me what's bothering her."

"It hurts me, Mom. We've always been close, as a family, and then, whammo, just like that, Kim breaks this wonderful family tie without so much as giving us a reason for it even! It doesn't make sense. If she's displeased over something that's happened why doesn't she get it out in the open and tell us what it is?"
"I don't know, Son. I just don't know. I wish I did. Your father and I have prayed so earnestly for God to show us how to help her, and to give us wisdom in dealing with her. I've shed a lot of tears, I know this. If I didn't know better, I'd believe she's into doing drugs. They say this is one of the signs of a person who's into drugs. But I know this is not the case with your sister, and..."

"Indeed it isn't!" Kim stood in the kitchen doorway, looking smitten and hurt. Then she burst into tears and sobbed uncontrollably. "you know I wouldn't get into something so... so... vile and... and degrading," she cried.

Mrs. Seaforth rushed over and wrapped her daughter in her arms. "What is bothering you, dear?" she asked as tears coursed down her cheeks. "Please, Kimberly, tell me. You know we all love you. Why have you closed your heart to us? You shut us out. Why? Why, Kim?"

Raising pain-filled eyes to her mother, Kim said, "Sin, Mother. Sin."

"Sin? Whatever do you mean, Kimberly?"

"Oh Mom, I'm so ashamed of myself. I've been ugly and short and mean to all of you and I'm so sorry. And so ashamed. I'm guilty, Mom; guilty. My conscience has whipped and lashed me until I have been tormented mercilessly. I've tried to conceal and hide what I did but it's impossible. My conscience won't let me rest. Day and night, I am tormented. I can't sleep, because I know I sinned...."

"Please, Kimberly, tell me what you have done. Please!"

"You know that test I told you about last week?"

"Yes, I remember. You made a high ninety on it, if I remember correctly."

"I cheated, Mother. Oh, I'm so sorry. I hadn't studied like I should have for the test and I was scared I'd fail it. So when Glenn Tobley's paper was turned toward me, I copied his answers. Oh, I feel so very, very wicked. I know I'm not ready for Heaven. But what can I do? I mean, well, what will Mrs. Steffens think when I tell her what I did?"
"Forget about what anybody thinks, Kim, and do what you know the Lord wants you to do. There's only one thing you can do to get back to God; you know what that is, honey."

"Will you and Ted please forgive me? I'm sorry for the way I treated you, and for how cutting and caustic and harsh I've been. I've been miserable. Miserable! I want to get right with God. . . ."

"Then let's pray, Kim. And of course you're forgiven by both Ted and me. I think you already know this."

Kim rushed to her brother, and threw her arms around his neck. as he told her he freely forgave her, then she fell to her knees and prayed until she knew she was forgiven by God.

"Oh, Mother," she remarked sometime later, "I never realized just how far one could go when they backslide until this happened to me. Oh, the mercy and the grace of God! I love Him so. I know it won't be easy, but tomorrow, God willing . . . Mrs. Steffens and I are going to have a meeting . . .

Mrs. Seaforth saw Kimberly before she reached their yard, even, the following afternoon, and she knew immediately that everything had been taken care of. She could tell it by Kimberly's walk and the look of peace on her face.

"Hi, Mom," the girl cried as she took the porch steps two at a time and bounded into the kitchen. "Oh, I feel great. This has been such a wonderful, wonderful day. I went to Mrs. Steffens first thing this morning and told her everything. I mean, I told her everything -- how miserable my sin had made me feel; and how nasty and mean I had been to my dear family members, and how I knew that if I'd die, I'd go to hell. I told her I didn't deserve that 97 that she gave me; that I had cheated to get it -- off Glenn's paper. I told her she could give me a failing mark, or whatever, but that I didn't earn that mark by my intellect; that it was the grade of a cheater.

"She seemed all nervous and fidgety, like she didn't know what to do. Then she asked if I'd be willing to take it over and make a grade for myself. I told her I'd love to, if that was fair and honest and right.
"She said it would be just fine and that I was to come back after lunch and she'd let me take it over. And Mother, I feel simply wonderful! I took it over, and whether I make a good grade or a failing grade is not important to me this time because, you see, today I took that test knowing the Lord was smiling His approval down upon me. Oh, I feel so wonderful. I'm free! Free! From sin and its galling, binding fetters and from a guilty conscience."

Mrs. Seaforth hugged Kimberly and shouted for joy.