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**GOING HOME**  
**By Mrs. Paul E. King**  
**(Part 1)**

"Not again!" Caitlin exclaimed as she breezed through the doorway into the small apartment she shared with Daneesha Furman. "You're impossible. And all my little lectures have availed nothing, it's plain to see." She put her coat on a hanger and hung it inside the closet.

"Oh Caitlin, don't castigate me, please. It isn't funny and neither is it something I can help. I'm sorry you saw me crying."

"It may not be funny," Caitlin replied quickly, "but I'm not exactly sure that it's not something you can help. You need to grow up, Daneesha. This silly idea of going home again, now that you're in your last and final year of study toward becoming a full-fledged, well-paid anesthetist is completely crazy. Home can never be the same again, now that you've left the nest. And since your father's no longer there and. . . ."

"Don't say anymore, Cait, please," Daneesha cried. "It's painful enough as it is. And I . . . I . . . well, I have this pulling, drawing feeling that I must go home."

"But what about the trip some of us have planned? I thought you wanted to go."

"I'd love seeing the sights, Cait; I know I would. But I have this deep desire to go home again. So, for my three-four days off, God willing, I'm going home. It's just something I feel I must do. And I . . . I owe it to Mother."

Caitlin stared for a long while at Daneesha. "Softening up, huh?"

"Maybe."

Caitlin mumbled something beneath her breath then hurried to the refrigerator and tossed a salad for herself. "I hear you turned Doctor Journigan down again," she stated casually as she poured Italian dressing over the crisp salad.

Daneesha sighed. "News surely gets around here. Fast," she answered softly. "I can't figure out who has all the ears, though. I thought the young intern and I were alone at the nurses' station when he asked me to go out with him."

"How much more naive can you get, Daneesha? You know as well as I that every last one of the young unmarried nurses is dying -- literally dying -- to be asked out by Doctor Journigan. And so far, you're the only one to whom he seems to be attracted. Yet you blow it. Sometimes I wonder what's in that little head of yours."

Daneesha smiled. "I'm a very busy woman, Caitlin. And, well, I have certain. . . ."

"Don't say it, Daneesha, please," Caitlin cut in. "You told me once -- was it four years ago? Five, maybe? -- that your husband-to-be must be 'a Christian; genuinely saved, wholly sanctified and walking close to the Lord.' Every descriptive adjective and single word, yours. You see, I memorized the description of your Prince Charming. I thought it was cute. And funny. And I'll tell you now as I told you then, stop looking, my dear; you'll never find him."

"Perhaps not in my present circle of friends," Daneesha conceded.

"But in the church circle, huh? I thought you were getting over this religious fanaticism, Daneesha."

Daneesha walked over to the tiny table and sat in the chair across from her roommate. "You know, Cait," she said, "I can scarcely believe sometimes that you're the same person who came here for training the same time I did. I was delighted to know we'd be rooming together for these busy, cram-full years. You see, Caitlin, I was thankful because I knew you were a church-going person; and I had heard your folks tell mine that you loved to read the Bible and to pray and. . . ."

"That's before I started to think for myself," Caitlin cut in. "I was brought up to go to church all my life. It was custom with our family. Habit."

"Were you never born again?" Daneesha asked quietly.

"How many times will you ask me this?" Caitlin asked crossly. "If this were the first time, Daneesha, I may be able to overlook it; but if I've been asked this question once, I'd say it's more like a dozen or two dozen times."

"Please, Caitlin, answer me -- do you know what it means to be born again? To be converted?"

"That's my business," came the hasty retort. "I think you've heard that answer before. So let's drop the whole thing and just go along as good friends, okay?"

Daneesha sighed. "Someday, Cait, you'll wish you had known the Lord Jesus Christ in a personal way. There is no neutral ground where spiritual things are concerned."

"Whew, what a sermon! It's plain to see that you haven't changed your philosophy too much."

"Philosophy? Oh, Caitlin, what I possessed when I came here was not philosophy; it was salvation and holiness of heart. And had I not allowed you to sway me, I'd never have gotten off track in even the tiniest way. But your little speeches were so clever and innocent sounding until, with the push and grind of study, study, study, and the little time I had to spend alone with God and His Word, I leaked out."

"Leaked out? Forevermore, Daneesha, don't say that: People will take you for a fool. You can't 'leak out.'"

"In spiritual things, you can. And I did. This is why I feel I must go home. I'll have time to be alone; time to talk with the Lord and . . . and time to get back on track again. You see, I know too much to feel comfortable in my present spiritual state. I . . . I want to be ready for the great event that's going to take place."

"I suppose you are referring again to something that pertains to your religion."

"It's not my religion, dear; it's told in the Bible. Jesus is coming back to earth one of these days to catch away His saved and sanctified people: His saints. They're called the Bride of Christ. And only those who are pure in heart and who are holy and clean are going to go up when He comes."

Caitlin gestured with her hands, exclaiming as she did so, "Now you sound mystical! What church did you say you belong to? I'm sure glad my church didn't try to scare me with . . . with tales like that."

"Oh, but it isn't a tale; it's in God's Word. Surely you've read about it if you've read the Bible," Daneesha remarked soberly. "Jesus said, 'In such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh: Be ye therefore ready.' He told about the five wise virgins and the five foolish virgins, too. And He told us to

keep our lamps burning brightly, with plenty of oil in them, so we can go with the Bridegroom when He comes."

"That's been told for years and years, Daneesha, and still the world goes on, like always."

"But one of these days it will become reality. Yes, as surely as I am telling you, it will become a reality. Jesus will come for His Bride. What will you do then, Caitlin? It will be too late to change. And then the great tribulation will begin."

Daneesha shivered with the thought.

Caitlin became irritated. "I never could stand lectures," she declared. "And I'll thank you to stop further talk or elaboration on Biblical texts or themes or whatever they're called, right now."

"I'm sorry, Cait. I didn't mean to . . . to make you angry. But don't you think it would be profitable for you to face the truth and. . . ."

"I said I don't want to hear anymore," Caitlin cut in sharply, "and I mean it!"

"All right," Daneesha said, as she walked into her bedroom to the desk and began to study. She would be so thankful when the day came that she could have a place of her own. Maybe a little home, even, where her mother and she could live together. Only, she was sure that her mother wouldn't want to live in a big city. She wouldn't like the noise and the constant flow of traffic up and down the streets, Daneesha was sure. Her mother liked the peace and the quiet of the country. She'd been reared there, and when she had married she married a boy who was country bred and country reared and, together, they built their four-bedroom home midway between both sets of parents -- in the country.

Daneesha smiled, recalling the dear old home place, the only house she had ever lived in until coming to the city to study for the work she wanted to do. Twenty acres of pasture land was on the place. Her father had used up part of this to make an orchard and a garden. Never had fruit tasted so delicious as that which she could pick with her own hands and eat from that beautifully-kept and carefully-tended orchard of her father's. He was quite a

fruit-grower, gardener and husbandman. More than that, he was a righteous man; a saint, and she knew it.

She stared at the pages in the book, her mind very definitely not on the printed matter before her. Her father's face came into sharp focus, lucid and clear. His eyes were fixed upon her. Great, deep pools of sorrow reflected from them to her -- like he used to look at her when she had disobeyed him and grieved him. He was such a good father. So kind. So patient.

"Father! Father!" she whispered brokenly as she dropped her head on her arms and wept.

(Part 2)

Daneesha's little car seemed to skim across the highway as she neared the dear old homeplace. Inside her chest, her heart beat rapidly in eager anticipation of going home again, if only for a few days. Who said you could never go home again once you had left the nest? They'd said it would never be the same; that time and change had worked its woof and its yarn so subtly but surely into the pattern of life and of years until one could not "go home again." Not ever. But she would prove them wrong!

She turned off the well-traveled highway onto a country road. Oh, it was good to be going home: good to see the familiar landmarks again; fences and houses and orchards and farms which she'd seen all her life. Her pulses quickened at sight of the dear familiar landmarks.

Landmarks! Why, the Bible had something to say about a landmark. Yes, it did! It did! It said, "Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set" (Proverbs 22:28). Her father had set some landmarks for his family too -- spiritual landmarks. They were "set" as bounds, to keep his children from sin and wickedness and unrighteousness. So long as each stayed within the "landmark" he was safe. There was a sense of protection within its bounds. But if the "landmark" was disregarded or removed, well. . . .

Daneesha nearly trembled as she thought how very close she had come to removing some of the landmarks which her godly father had set up for his family. Caitlin wasn't nearly so smart as she had once thought her to be, Daneesha realized again. Clever, yes, and manipulative too. But God had awakened her -- Daneesha -- in time. She finally saw through Caitlin's

Carefully laid plans and her schemes, all to break her down spiritually and to do away with her father's "old landmarks." But an awakened mind is an active mind, and hers had seemed to be going in full power since the Lord revealed her spiritual state to her. And so she was coming home. In two ways, coming home.

Daneesha bounded out of the car as soon as it stopped in the driveway beside the house. Like the little, carefree girl of yester-year she ran to the back door, calling excitedly, "Mother! Mother, I'm home!"

The kitchen door was open before she reached it even and a gentle voice cried, "Daughter! Daughter! Oh Daneesha you're home! You're home!"

Never had her mother's arms felt more loving nor more wonderful and warm. She clung to her for a long time.

"This is a beautiful surprise," Mrs. Furman said as she released the tall, slender girl.

"Oh, Mother, I could hardly wait to come home. I was slipping."

"Slipping?" Mrs. Furman waited anxiously; expectantly.

"Yes, slipping. Away from God. But He awakened me in time to see that what I was beginning to think may be right was still wrong. All wrong! Caitlin's subtle innuendos regarding the tenets of my faith -- of God's Word, actually and really -- were suddenly and forcibly revealed to me for what they were intended."

"And what was that, my dear?"

"To erode and destroy my faith in God and to tear down the landmarks which both Daddy and you set up for us. Thanks for praying, Mother. Thanks much. I know it was your prayers that got God's attention and caused Him to send the Holy Spirit to discomfort me. I've come home, Mother, to tell you I love you -- in person -- and to ask you to forgive me for being neglectful of you. I could have come home more often to see you; but Caitlin made me feel like I was being childish whenever I mentioned that I needed to get to see you. She's very independent of her parents; her entire family, really. She

feels her life is her own and that she has a right to live it the way she wants to."

"We'll have to pray more earnestly for your roommate, dear. Now come inside and we'll have a cup of tea and some cinnamon rolls. I just took them out of the oven before you got here."

Daneesha kissed her mother then got the few things out of her car and was soon inside. She hurried down the hallway to the dear, familiar bedroom and hung her dresses inside the closet then she rushed back to her mother like an excited child on Christmas morning, crying happily, "Oh, Mother, Mother, it's so good to be home!"

They had their tea and cinnamon rolls over much chatter and excitement. After a while, Daneesha said, "I'd like to visit Daddy's grave, Mother. Do you want to go along?"

"I was there only yesterday, honey. I think it may do you good to be alone with him."

"I was hoping you'd feel this way," Daneesha replied softly. "I would like to . . . well, to reestablish some things over his grave. I feel like I was getting near to questioning some of the values he instilled into me as a child. Oh, Mother, the world is not a friend of God and of grace. I've often heard this said; but I have experienced it first hand during these years of training and preparing. I understand what Jesus meant when He said the way is narrow and the gate strait and few who would go in thereat. Without a doubt, the true Christian is a pilgrim and a stranger in this world."

"We're citizens of another Country, my dear. We're marching to the drumbeat of an unworldly drummer. And is it worth it? If your father could reply, he'd have some marvelous accounts to tell us about, Daneesha. And we both know that, whatever the cost, Heaven will be worth it all."

Daneesha felt the urge to get to the graveside of her father. Her mother, sensing this, urged her to leave. The short drive there afforded her time to think.

It was cool inside the cemetery. Trees stood like tall, shady sentinels guarding and protecting each grave. In damp areas, tall dark-green ferns

spread their fronds gracefully, nodding ever so slightly to the gentle breezes that played hopscotch among the granite stones and the lush green grass.

Daneesha drove to the far end of the quietly peaceful cemetery and parked the car. In a little while she was at her father's grave. No tall, impressive looking stone of marble stood to commemorate his resting place; rather, a simple headstone, almost flat with the earth, marked his burial site. As she stood at the bottom of the grave, she was smitten with the thought that the grave sites made everyone equal. Little matter about wealth or fame, or popularity or poverty; each grave was the same size for every adult. What good, then, was wealth? And yes, what good was fame? Or popularity? In the grave, it mattered nothing.

Out of respect for the dead, she was taught to never walk over the grave. So she walked up to where the simple marker gave testimony of his birth and his death, with the name Nathan Samuel Furman engraved solidly in it. There she knelt down, broken and weeping and totally unashamed of it.

"Father, dear," she said softly, "I've come home again. Home, to be the little girl of yesteryear. I almost succumbed to the suggestion of one whom I thought was my friend. . . ."

Tears fell freely; Daneesha's heart was melted. She had no rebellion; no resistance; none at all: Her heart was full of contrition and sorrow for having even so much as listened to Caitlin's carefully phrased innuendos regarding things pertaining to God and her beliefs relative to Biblical truths.

If she had received her summons to die suddenly, and totally unexpectedly, the way her father had died, she knew she would not be enjoying Heaven's splendors and its grandeur the way she knew her father was now doing. Her faith was not anchored the way it had once been -- securely, and without any doubt whatever, in God.

Her father had gone to the top of the mountain, her mother had told her. He and his labrador retriever, Gretel. It was a two-mile hike up the sloping terrain. He had hiked it three to four times each week since retiring -- up to the tiny spring that awaited him and provided refreshment for him and the dog.

He did much praying there, Daneesha knew, from instances she recalled of him relating regarding answers to prayer.

He was late in returning home -- much too late, her mother had said -- so she called for help. Late afternoon they found him -- resting. Forever.

Gretel, not understanding why her master rested so long, contented herself by resting her beautiful head on his lap. She would not think of leaving his side. Never. The bond between them was like steel; forged solidly and for keeps. When the strangers arrived with their medical bags and other paraphernalia, she would not allow them near him. She would give her life for him. Such was her devotion. And not until she heard a familiar voice did she leave his side.

She grieved and sorrowed for many days, almost going into the jaws of death herself by her refusal to eat. Until one day when she seemed to realize that her beloved master's departure was permanent and she began to eat. Then it was that she bonded tightly to Daneesha's mother, being as loyal and devoted to her as she was to her former master.

Daneesha wept as she recalled the events surrounding his sudden death. The news had left her feeling numb and at a great loss. Caitlin had told her that, in her profession, she must not become emotional; that she must "conquer" her inability to conceal her emotions by steeling herself and refusing to cry and give vent to her feelings. But she found it impossible to heed the advice. And now, kneeling by her father's headstone, Daneesha was thankful that the gentle Spirit of God had kept her heart open and tender. The Word -- oh, the precious Word! she thought -had declared that God would not despise the broken and the contrite heart. (Psalms 34:18 and 51:17. Also Isaiah 57:15.)

She wept and prayed until the peace and the joy of the Lord was once again reigning within and was flooding and filling her soul. She had come home again; in the fullest sense and meaning of the phrase and of the words -- the spiritual sense. Oh, it was good to be home again -- with her Heavenly Father as well as with her beloved earthly mother.

Kneeling beside the simple marker, Daneesha raised her hands heavenward. "Daddy," she said through joyful tears, "thank you for the

landmarks. By God's grace, and from this moment on, I mean to uphold them and to embrace them."

She remained on her knees for a long while; the presence of the Lord seemed to have filled the entire area of the cemetery. She feasted at the spiritual table and drank freely of the cool, refreshing, life-giving, soul-satisfying water. Oh, it was good to be Home again -- in God's Household of Faith; the family of God!

--The End --