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GOD'S INSTRUMENT
By Mrs. Paul E. King

Jill couldn't understand the reason for the urge to go walking when she had so many things to do before school the following morning and the youth meeting at church that night. As president of the young people's group, she tried never to miss a service and never to be late getting there. Sometimes it meant cutting out something else but she was always there--and on time.

She zipped the wind breaker jacket up to her neck: the wind coming in off the ocean was getting cold; she wished she had put a scarf around her neck for added warmth and protection.

The smell of tangy seaweed and salt water gave her a feeling of exhilaration, putting a lilt to her step and giving her a feeling of physical fitness and well-being. Every part of her seemed to come alive, and for a while she was totally absorbed in the sights and sounds surrounding her. It was beautiful, this land that had been home to her since the day of her birth. She loved it; loved it passionately, harsh and hard though the winters could be and generally were. The heavy accumulations of sparkling, glistening snow enhanced the pristine beauty of the town and its surrounding areas and villages, giving everything around a look of enchantment. She loved it.

Jill's eyes wandered to the shoreline now and to the mountains of craggy rocks that jutted out into the ocean and towered skyward, many of them forming formidable cliffs and walls. It was an awesome sight, one over which she never ceased to be amazed. But this, too, she loved.

She stood for a while, watching as the great sea-going vessels plowed the water far out in the deep and the usual amount of sloops and trawlers made their way shoreward before the sun tipped its hat in a farewell greeting for the day.

Above her and around her, gulls wheeled and circled and mewed and screeched noisily. She delighted in watching them and listening to them. They were waiting for the fishing boats to arrive with their haul of fish and shrimp and lobsters. What a noisy, excited and eager flock of birds they were, and what a racket awaited the tired but brave and brawny fishermen. But they were used to the cacophony of mews and squeals and screeching and seemed to relish the welcome-in-from-sea greeting by their wheeling, dipping and screeching feathered friends. Many a tasty tidbit from the sea was tossed skyward by the approaching fisherman and the noise from the gulls was almost deafening as they soared upward after the "handouts." The sky became a blur of wings. It was fascinating.

Jill watched until she saw the first group of trawlers dock and fasten their vessels securely to the pilings then she turned and hurried toward the rocky shore some distance away, not understanding her reason for going

there but feeling constrained to do so. It was as though she was being led by an invisible hand.

She walked on until she came to a familiar place among the rocks; a place where she had "hosted" a picnic for three of her closest friends when she was quite a bit smaller and five years younger; a picnic of peanut butter sandwiches, apples, carrots and pretzels. She had asked her mother if she could have a picnic with Betsy and Nikki and Sasha and her mother had consented without any hesitation. She had meant to have it in her back yard until she thought how nice it would be to have it on what she called her "rock table" along the shoreline. So the four of them trudged to the shore and ate their picnic lunch from the big, round, flat stone that did, indeed, resemble a table. And though they received their "just dues" when they arrived home for not telling her mother where they were going, the four girls had many a happy time there as they grew older and received permission to go back.

Jill smiled as she drew nearer to the "table" rock. She and her friends often sat on the "table" and watched the waves as they tumbled and rolled in shoreward, seeming to linger only long enough to place a wet kiss on the sandy shore then to rush seaward again.

They had prayer vigils there and heart to heart discussions; other times they just sat quietly, watching the mighty handiwork of God. Or maybe she and Betsy would bring their oils and canvas and paint what they were seeing, while Nikki and Sasha either wrote or did knitting; each was skillful with her needles and made beautiful sweaters and gloves and hats and scarves.

Jill was so engrossed in the pleasant memories she had shared with her friends that she almost missed seeing the slender girl who was walking carefully in among the rocks which could serve as a hiding place for one, if he/she chose to make it that.

She paused and watched, wondering what the young woman was doing and why she was there. She resembled Nikki, Jill thought, as she watched more carefully now.

Slowly, Jill started walking again, keeping her eyes on the slender lithe figure making her way in among the rocks, almost disappearing behind them at times then emerging again. Suddenly, she stopped in front of the table rock. Dropping down on her knees, Jill watched as she reached way back

beneath the big, flat, round rock and pulled out a bundle. Whatever was she doing? A box?

She quickened her pace now, and when the young woman got to her feet, Jill recognized her.

"Nikki. Nikki," Jill called, racing in and out among the low-cropping rocks and shortening the distance between them. When next she called, Nikki stopped dead still in her tracks.

Walking carefully now lest she stumble on the sharp, more jagged rocks, Jill finally stood in front of her friend. "Nikki," she said, "are you all right? What do you have in that . . . that. . . ?"

"It's clothing, Jill. How'd you know I was here?" Nikki's face was pale. She looked tired.

"I didn't know, Nikki; but God did. So out with it; what's wrong? Why the clothes? And why would you hide them among rocks?"

Nikki slumped down on a rock. Covering her face with her hands, she broke out into sobs.

"Oh, Nikki, Nikki, what's wrong? Please tell me," Jill urged, putting an arm around her friend and weeping with her.

Nikki raised tear-filled eyes to Jill and, sobbing brokenly, she said, "I'm going to run away from home, Jill."

"Run away from home!" Jill cried, incredulously. "Why, Nikki? Why? You have a lovely home and you have parents who really care about you and who love you very much. Why would you do such a thing? It's wrong."

"Oh, Jill, if you only knew! Mother is so demanding of me. And . . . and she . . . she told me I dare not -- positively dare not -- go out with Roger at all. And . . . and he isn't allowed to call me and I can't call him. They're cruel to me, both Mother and Dad are. Karla's going through the same thing I am. We're leaving home."

"Where will you go, Nikki?"

"Anywhere! We don't care where, just so we can get away."

Jill put her hands on Nikki's shoulders. Tilting Nikki's face to meet her eyes, she said kindly, "You'll be out of God's will if you do it, Nikki, and that's the most dangerous place in all the world to be. I don't need to remind you but I'm going to do it anyhow, that it is the runaway girls who usually wind up in the power of pimps and whose mutilated and murdered bodies are dumped off in ditches and pits and along lonely, isolated roads and in woods and, well, just anywhere. Is that what you want?"

"But Jill, you don't have to live in my home."

"True, but God's Word admonishes us to honor our parents and to be obedient to them. Your mother is trying to keep you from heartache and pain, Nikki. Roger is not a Christian, and you. . . ."

"I'm not either, Jill. So what's the big deal?"

Tears filled Jill's eyes. Suddenly she understood why Nikki seldom came around anymore.

"Nikki, I love you," she said brokenly. "Ask the Lord Jesus to come back into your heart and to forgive you for rebelling against Him and against your parents. Please, Nikki. You've known the joy of serving Jesus and the wonderful peace and love which Christ gives. You were once ready for Heaven and ready to meet God. But now . . . oh, Nikki, you're not ready. You don't want to lose your soul and go to hell; I know you don't. Please Nikki, come home -- to the Savior's open, waiting arms."

Nikki looked at Jill, whose face was wet with tears. Suddenly, she was sobbing.

"Come home, Nikki. Come home," Jill pleaded tearfully. "You'll have nothing but sorrow and regret and heartache and tears if you don't. The Bible tells us that the way of transgressors is hard. Let's pray, Nikki. Please!"

"Oh Jill, you're right; I don't want to lose my soul and go to hell. I don't! I don't! I . . . I guess I never stopped to think about that. Please pray, Jill. I wandered so far. So very far. I . . . I'm . . . sorry, Jesus. So sorry. . . ." And

Nikki's voice rose in an agony of sorrow for sin and in a penitential prayer. Higher and higher it rose and soared as on and on she prayed, earnestly, fervently and repentantly. And suddenly it was settled: She was converted. Peace and soul rest and joy were hers. Her shouts of praise rose and fell with the rolling surf. It was glorious.

All the way home, Jill's heart was full of praise to the Lord for leading her to Nikki. His ways were past finding out, indeed. It was wonderful to be God's instrument. Yes, it was wonderful. And blessed, too.