The wind blew like a wild maniac, swirling paper, garbage can lids and debris in all directions as it swept down Shore Street and whistled around the houses. Ron Engells, just home from the Mission Harbor after locking the office door securely for the night, sat in one of the softer chairs in the living room sipping a cup of hot chocolate which his tiny, aging, but still strong wife
had ready for him when he climbed the steps to the apartment above the mission.

"Pity anyone who's out on a night like this!" he exclaimed, more to himself than to Madeline, his wife of almost forty-three years.

Pouring a cup of steaming-hot chocolate for herself, Madeline answered softly, "I was just thinking the same thing, dear. Yet, less than ten minutes ago, while standing in front of the window watching for you to come up the steps, I saw a young man heading toward the lake. Ron, he wasn't dressed for this kind of weather. I wonder where he was going. Why would anyone go to the lake at this hour, and in sub-zero weather, with a wind that howls and screams its terror at your heels and knocks the breath down your throat? It doesn't make sense. I called to him, trying to get his attention, hoping he'd accept a warm jacket, at the least. I'm afraid my words were drowned out by this wild wind. I hope he'll be all right. How anyone can live and survive in this kind of weather amazes me. Especially so without heavy, warm clothing."

Getting to his feet and quickly downing the remainder of hot chocolate in his cup, Ron strode over to the clothes tree and grabbed his heavy top coat from one of the pegs, saying, "This explains the reason for the pull I've felt for the past ten or twelve minutes."

"The pull? What do you mean, my dear? Certainly you're not going out on a night like this!" Madeline's voice was incredulous and worried sounding.

"I must, dear Madeline. I must. Less than fifteen minutes ago, while sitting at my desk and straightening papers for tomorrow's work, I felt the most compelling urge ever to go to the lake."

"O Ron, please! You could freeze to death, out on a night like this. The wind chill factor's a frightening 30 degrees below zero. Please. . . ."

"I must heed the Master's voice, my dear. Surely, He who leads will take care of me. Suppose the young man were my brother's son, would we not expend all our energy and effort to rescue him?"

"But we don't know where Gregg is, Ron. Nor, even, if he's alive. It's been four years since he dropped out of Blaine and Sarah's life."
"I know. But this young fellow whom you saw wasn't heading for the lake just to watch the water. Not on a night like this. He's some mother's boy, and I must check on him. I have a feeling he's in trouble. I must go to him, Madeline, before it's too late. Have the bed ready in the little guest room and keep the hot chocolate at the ready. Pray for me as I go, my dear. . . ."

Madeline picked up the Bible and turned to the 91st Psalm, her favorite scripture in times of danger and trouble. Then she began to pray earnestly, fervently, while the wind went screaming around the mission house, moaning mournfully down the chimney and rattling the windows fiercely with its icy fists.

The young man came before her then. Who was he, she wondered, and where did he come from? Would her brother-in-law and sister-in-law's son be as tall as the stranger whom she had seen? If so, why would he be here, in their little city?

The questions heightened her concern for Gregg. She should have prayed more for him, she realized with a sudden pang of conscience. True, he was always of a stubborn nature, and so very headstrong too, and she had prayed for him, to be sure. But she felt she should have prayed more consistently and more fervently for him.

What was it that had caused him to turn out the way he did, after having been reared in a home such as he had? she wondered. All five of his siblings had given their hearts to the Lord before reaching young adulthood and were serving the Savior with joyfulness. Not Gregg. He was indeed like the prodigal son in the Bible. His desires were anything and everything but godly, and all the loving and kind entreaties of his parents had seemed to have no impact whatever upon him. Talented musically beyond any describing, he had gone from the high school band into a small band from a neighboring town, then into a larger orchestra from the city, playing in night clubs, taverns and theaters, where he became known as the youngest and greatest musician around.

Madeline walked to the window now and glanced out, wondering where Ron was; how close to the lake he might be. Surely, there must be help for the young stranger, she reasoned, else why would her husband have had the urge and pull to go to the lake? God didn't waste anyone's time nor make
unreasonable requests or demands. No. No. Everything he did was for a purpose and reason.

She thought of the young man who had come to the mission two days ago, and thanked God that he had stumbled down their street and literally fallen against the door before collapsing on the sidewalk. The thud and the thump of his body against the door was heard by one of Ron's assistants, A1, who rushed to the door and found the nearly-dead man. Lifting his thin, lightly-clad body in his strong arms, he brought the man inside and put him on one of the clean beds, then called the doctor.

Madeline's body trembled slightly as she recalled how very near to death the young man was. It had been God's mercy and His goodness, she knew without a doubt, that had caused him to collapse in front of the mission door. What human wrecks Satan made of those who chose to follow him and his leading! she thought. What slaves to alcohol and drugs and immorality they became! It would be a long while before the young man, Clair, was strong enough to be on his own again. If ever. He was being checked for AIDS. What price, sin! She thought, as tears filled her eyes.

She picked up the knitting needles and began working on the sweater she was making for a man. Any man. Long ago, she had lost count of the many sweaters and caps she had made and given out to the men who came by the mission, penniless, dirty, ill-clad and nearly starved. Human wrecks on the sea of life, they were. Driftwood, cast up by sin's sea and cast out by humanity; mocked, taunted and tormented by Satan and left to die on the ash heap of failure, defeat and doom.

Madeline thanked God for the mission and its soul-saving, heart-cleansing message. It was indeed a lighthouse for troubled souls, whose abodes were corrugated boxes in alleys, beneath underpasses and wherever they may happen to be. How very, very sad! she mused, remembering that each was, at some time or other, the pride and joy of a mother, whose arms cradled, caressed and held the now sick, bleary-eyed half-starved men with whom the mission workers dealt and rescued.

Her still-nimble fingers worked busily away and an agonizing prayer went into the adding-on and taking-off of the busily flying needles; a prayer for the return of the prodigal and the wearer of whomever the owner of the sweater may be. Through her act of kindness, she prayed that her gift of love
may radiate Heaven's pure and holy Light and draw its owner to the Savior of men who alone was their salvation, their hope and their help.

She cast a quick glance at the old clock on the wall. It had been ticking out the time and hanging on the wall of their living room for so long as Ron and she were married, having moved right along with them, wherever they moved and went. It had been as faithful to them in accurate time-telling as her companion and she had been to each other and their sacred marriage vows, made so long ago. An hour had gone by since her husband had left, she noted with concern.

"Protect him, Lord," she prayed. "Please protect him. Bring him safely back to me, and save the prodigal for whom he has gone in search."

The wind continued its wild screaming and moaning, reminding the faithful little woman of the doomed and the lost; those whose eternal abode was the lake of fire. Tears sprang to her eyes as she thought of first one, then another, who had departed this life with a scream of torment on his lips, uttering only two words, "I'm lost!"

"Don't let this young man die, Lord! Please don't!" she cried out in anguish of soul. "Humble him down, whoever he may be. Make him willing and ready to yield to Thee."

A footfall on the little landing outside alerted Madeline to the fact that someone was at the door. In a flash, she was on her feet and at the door. It was Dwight, one of the men who watched over and cared for the men who spent a night or more in the mission.

"Your husband is downstairs," Dwight stated. "He sent me up to tell you. He found the young man."

"I'll be down," Madeline stated, turning to get a coat.

"Your husband said to tell you he'll be up, and for you not to come down. We'll be putting the newcomer in the room next to the supply room. I called Myron; he's on his way over. I must go now; your husband needs me."

Turning, Dwight Carter hurried down the steps with Madeline's thank you tossed to him by the wild, wild wind.
Closing the door against the piercing-cold wind, Madeline settled down to her knitting with a grateful heart: grateful and thankful in two ways, especially; Ron was home safe, and the young man was found. The room in which the "stray" was being placed, however, spoke its sadly-silent message to her: this man was suicidal and would need continual watching for a while. And who, better than Myron Fields, could be there to look after and care for yet another who was as Myron himself had been once upon a time.

What a great deliverance God had given Myron! Madeline thought, recalling the man's struggles and fierce battles with the demons of drink and drugs and his feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness in the loss of power, money, prominence, prestige and popularity. Myron knew, by painful and shameful experience, just how far down sin and Satan could take one; how, from lofty heights of fame one could be brought down to the gutter and the quagmire of guilt and shame.

Half an hour later, Madeline heard her husband's voice: it had an air of triumph in it; a note of victory. She rushed to him; into his wide open arms.

"It's he, Madeline. It's he!" Ron exclaimed triumphantly. "It's Gregg. Can you believe it! My nephew! Gregg! Oh, God be praised! I saw him just before he . . . he . . ." Ron shuddered. Then, with heightened joy, he remarked, "God's timing is perfect, my dear. Always, perfect! He was on the very edge of the long pier that juts far out into the lake. It's deep out there; so very deep. He was ready to jump. I knew I dare not excite him. He didn't know I was there. So I walked up behind him, grabbed him, and dragged him away from that pit of death.

"He fought me fiercely. I held him tightly and firmly, giving him enough time to expend both his strength and his energy, then I led him off the pier. The moment I got him beneath a light, as we walked, I knew it was Gregg.

"'Gregg!' I cried. 'Gregg!' He jerked to attention and looked at me. Then he gasped and nearly collapsed in my arms, exclaiming in a faint, weak voice, 'Uncle Ron! Uncle Ron! Oh-h, Uncle Ron, I'm so glad you're here. Where did you come from? I was going to kill myself. I'm at the bottom,' he said, adding, 'there's nothing to live for. Nothing.'
"Oh Madeline, my dear, dear wife, we talked. All the way home from that pit of near-death, we talked, and I forgot completely about the cold and the wind; this in spite of the fact that I had made him take my topcoat and wear it.

"My heart is warm and glowing: God has rescued another soul out of the hand of Satan. Dwight and I helped to pray Gregg into the Shepherd's fold. We will bring him up here just as soon as I feel it is time. For now, he needs Myron's tender care and his help. Myron's been down the same road as our nephew, as you know. Gregg will benefit greatly from this saintly man's words and his godly counsel and wisdom."

"Sit down, Ron, while I bring you a warm robe and a cup of hot chocolate," Madeline said, teary-eyed and praise-filled.

"Thank you, my dear. But only for a little while will I sit: I must put a call through to my dear brother and sister-in-law, telling them that the lost has been found and that, through the saving, forgiving power in the Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, their son faces this New Year with a new heart, washed whiter than the driven snow."

Pouring the hot chocolate into the cup, Madeline's joy overflowed and she began to shout. God's love was indeed beyond human comprehension. She was thankful, oh, so thankful, that Ron had heeded "the pull" and followed the Spirit's leading to go to the lake. By doing so, a soul had been rescued and a new year had begun for him. And a new beginning, bright and beautiful with Jesus, the Savior of the world.