Allendra Marsing tucked the last strand of auburn-redbrown hair upon her head; then she hurried to the windows and pulled the heavy draperies to allow light into the room. If there was one thing she hated, detested and despised more than a dark room she didn't know what it was. Bad enough to
have to live in the "boonies," in a mountain, at that, she thought bitterly, loathing the big log house which fate as she felt, had made possible.

Hearing a soft whistle, Allendra looked toward the horse barn and saw Peter with Snowball. He was rubbing the mare down and whistling for all he was worth. It was one of the hymns from the church. Turning quickly, she fled from the room. Peter made her sick. Sick! All his optimism and happiness sickened her. For so long as she could remember, Peter was joyful. Always joyful. But then, that was because Peter "had surrendered his heart and life to the Lord," her parents told her repeatedly.

Allendra slipped into her boots and plaid wool coat, grabbed a heavy scarf and gloves from a drawer, then slipped quietly out the back door hoping to escape the keen and watchful eyes of her mother. She would get away from Peter and his ever-constant joyful spirit. True, it wouldn't do her any harm to change her attitude to some degree. Or, as her parents told her, to change it completely. But little matter, they had always favored Peter anyway, hadn't they?

She was off the porch in short order. Less than forty steps away was the dense forest into which she escaped. The newly fallen snow less than two days earlier had crusted over with a thick crust over which she walked at a brisk pace. The brittle-cold early morning air seemed to clear her brain and her thoughts about her brother took on a gentler nature. Maybe she was jealous of him, like her best friend had told her before she had had to move with her parents and brother to what she now called "the boonies."

At thought of Betsy, Allendra felt tears fill her eyes. Betsy could be so very frank. Almost brutally so. But Betsy was a super-wonderful friend, Allendra admitted silently now, and she loved her dearly. If only she could run over to her friend's house now, this very instant, and see Betsy and tell her how completely and utterly and positively she loathed and hated and despised it here, she thought, as she hurried through the dense woods.

Allendra felt sick at heart as she realized that within the next hour and forty-five minutes Betsy would be leaving her house and hurrying down the country road to catch the bus for school. For so long as both Betsy and she had lived and started to school, they had traveled the lane together, getting on the bus in the early morning and off it in the late afternoon, carrying school books in their back packs and swinging empty lunch pails in their hands.
What fun times they had had on their myriad trips to and from the bus, and what silly secrets they had shared! she thought, as tears swam in her eyes.

She stumbled, and nearly fell over a dead limb that protruded out of the crushed snow in a threatening, jaggedly-hazardous way, missing Betsy dreadfully and knowing that Betsy would have told her to be more careful and to watch where she was walking and going.

It didn't seem fair, she thought, brooding moodily, that she had to leave everything that was so very familiar and dear and wonderful to her and move to this desolate, unfamiliar and horribly lonely wilderness where here was nothing but absolute silence. No more school bus rides for her and no more silly and insipid secrets shared with one's best lifelong friend, either. Not even one! It wasn't fair. No, it wasn't. Especially when one's teacher was her very own mother!

At thought of her "losses," Allendra broke out in a sob. Her mother was a teacher indeed. A full-fledged, "degreed" teacher, extremely capable and proficient. But Mother wasn't Mr. Shetron nor Miss Cassidy, nor Mrs. Falliday or... .

At thought of Mrs. Falliday, Allendra stopped dead still. Always, her high school Language and History teacher had upset her and angered her with her "unreasonable demands," as she, Allendra, had phrased the middle-aged teacher's requests that each student "strive for excellence" in his or her work and lesson assignments. And now, suddenly and strangely enough, Allendra missed Mrs. Falliday. Without thinking, or even wondering why she was doing it, she began to recount ever so many ways in which the tall, angular but gentle-voiced teacher had silently but surely prodded and guided her toward excellence. Had it not been for Mrs. Falliday, she realized suddenly but factually, she would never have achieved, not even in a small measure, or met her requirements to make a decent passing grade even. As it was, and because of Mrs. Falliday's constant, "You can do better than you're doing, Allendra; so much better. Now get busy, and this time, I want your best. Nothing but your best." she had made the honor roll as a student in Crestline High.

Allendra felt a slight shiver go through her as she recalled how utterly lazy and dilatory she had been about her studies until she got into Mrs. Falliday's class. There had never been a problem with studying throughout
her elementary school years and, thinking back now to when she became a freshman in Crestline, she felt shame wash over her. Shellie Ackims had been the most popular girl in her class; she had tried to pattern her life after Shellie, to whom studying was anathema. Enter Mrs. Ethelene Falliday and her insistence for excellence and, well, the rest was history.

Sudden tears flowed from Allendra's eyes as she thought of her teachers and classmates. Never had she felt such deep appreciation and gratitude for them as she was experiencing now, alone in the early morning hours in the silently-still, bitterly-cold woods. It was true, she soliloquized sadly, one never missed what he had until it was taken from him. Then how great, how deep was that loss.

A small flash of white got her attention. Following the sudden motion with her eyes, she saw a skein of chickadees weaving through a nearby thicket of sweet birch. They moved in haphazard geometry, as if they were tied, one to the other, by short lengths of string that limited the distance of their individual flight from the flock and of then being yanked up short at the end of their tether and alighting in awkward positions, sometimes upside down or sideways. The tiny troupes of acrobats, singing their soft, lighthearted musical songs, captivated Allendra's full and whole attention. She stood like one mesmerized. At least there was one pleasant and nice thing here, she decided quickly as she canceled out the word utterly from her previously conceived thoughts. It was still desolate, only not utterly so, she conceded half grudgingly.

Like one awaking from sleep, she realized that she was not alone. Roosting in trees nearby, a large flock of turkeys, their plump black bodies silhouetted against a pink sky that peeked through openings in branches, were making gently wake up calls and roost talk before flying down to the ground with a startling "whap, whap, whap" sound. The commotion was distracting. On the ground now, a dozen or more nervous heads periscoped up at different angles before breaking up and going in every direction.

Allendra heaved a sigh of relief and let her breath out quick-like when the last bird was out of sight and had been swallowed up by the dense woods. What other startling experiences were around? she wondered, as she hesitated for a brief moment before shaking off her fears and pushing ahead.
She turned up the collar of her coat and buried her neck and face deeper into its comforting warmth as the near-zero temperature sent gray-white puffs of her every breath upward and the thought of the lessons which would begin at nine o'clock sharp were forgotten. Her mother was a stickler for punctuality; she had managed to block it out of her thoughts this morning, however.

Peter's whistling and hymn-sing of the morning seemed to be floating somewhere above her in the tall tree tops with the chilling wind. Only Peter's music wasn't cold nor biting, like the wind. Rather, it seemed to haunt her; to move and touch her. To beckon and invite her even.

Defiantly, she shook the thoughts from her mind. Peter was Peter. Period! But she wasn't Peter. So --! She was Allendra Marsing, with a mind of her own and plans for a future that would keep her on Easy Street once she had schooling completed.

She walked on at a brisk pace, unmindful of her whereabouts or how far into the great woods she was going, with no thought whatever to the fact that she was in unfamiliar territory and had absolutely no sense of direction. Her one main trend of thought was that of finishing twelfth grade and of hastening off to the University as quickly as possible after receiving her high school diploma. She wanted freedom from her parents and their demands and rules. Maybe Peter didn't mind these things nor consider them hard or harsh or binding, but she did. Oh, how she did! How many other young people had to be home by eleven o'clock sharp whenever they went out? And how many others her age -- or Peter's -- had to allow their parents to meet their friends before permission was granted for them to go out even?

Allendra felt anger and resentment churn inside her as she realized that, now that she had had to move, there would be no problem whatever with the eleven o'clock curfew and certainly not any with meeting her friends.

Friends! she thought derisively. What friends? She had no friends: not a single one in this new place into which her father had moved them; and her chances of making friends were slim indeed, with her being home-schooled and her mother her sole teacher.

Anger and resentment churned up inside her and something akin to hatred surged through her being as she thought again of Betsy, and all her
former fellow classmates with whom she was to have graduated in early June, but now, because of the move, she would not be doing so. Five months, she thought angrily, only five months until she, too, would have walked across the stage at Crestline High and received her diploma along with all her friends, who were very dear to her and whom she missed desperately.

The thought of having her diploma mailed to her sent a shower of tears down her cheeks and intensified her resentment toward her father for moving. Sure, sure, he was transferred and had to follow orders; but she could have stayed on with the Caldwells. Betsy had told her she was sure her parents wouldn't mind keeping her until she had graduated. Her father and mother, however, had other plans: "We are a family," her father had stated with kindness but authority. "We will stay together as a family. Your mother is not only a qualified teacher, degree-wise, she is also an excellent teacher, Allendra."

She walked at a rapid pace now, her footsteps matching the accelerated anger churning and boiling up within her. It seemed as if everything and everybody was against her, not caring at all about her and her feelings or desires and wishes. The move itself was bad enough, but the house into which they had to move -- the only one available at the time! . . . seemed to Allendra to be the ultimate disaster. Why couldn't they have moved into the little city? Why? At least there would have been a high school there, and she could have graduated from it like a normal person, she thought, as she wiped the icy-cold tears from her face.

Her thoughts turned again to Betsy and how she would have gushed over the log house and its perfect setting in the woods. But Betsy wasn't the one missing out on the graduation at Crestline High, was she? Maybe, just maybe, were Betsy in "her shoes," Allendra thought, Betsy might not be able to see only the beauty of the rustic house and its scenic surroundings either. Maybe Betsy would even be upset enough to be angry --

The last thought was tossed instantly and immediately out of her mind like something foul and dirty. For sure, Allendra knew that Betsy would not have become angry were she in this circumstance. Not at all! Betsy’s faith in the Lord Jesus Christ was an anchor that held her steady and steadfast and unshakably-solid through any and all changes that came into her life. Betsy was genuine through and through; saved and sanctified wholly and joyously
happy in Christ. If anyone knew the Lord, it was Betsy, her best-ever friend, who told her -- Allendra -that she was greatly concerned about her and her spiritual welfare and condition, and that she was praying for her.

That made two, Allendra thought quickly; two who were praying for her . . . Betsy and Peter. No, four, including her father and mother. Well, they could go on praying for her. It wouldn't do her any harm, and it certainly would help her, even though she wasn't "bad" or doing drugs or smoking and drinking and carousing around, she thought angrily, as she stomped her foot down hard on the crusted snow.

Like the shattering of thick glass, the crust broke. She went sprawling downward and sank chest-deep into the powdery depths of the hole she had made. (See Chapter 2)

(Part 2)

Allendra gasped and regained her composure, at least to some extent, once the shock of her fall had settled in upon her as a thing of reality instead of a dream. Flailing her arms frantically, she tried in vain to free herself from the "pit" of snow. The more she tried, however, the farther down she sank. It was almost like she was sinking into puffs of icy-cold powder, or flour, she thought, feeling more angry and upset than ever that her father had made the move to the remote, out-of-the-way area.

Reaching out to the rim of the hole through which she had crashed, she grabbed hold of the crusted surface snow and, straining fiercely, she tried to pull herself up and out. With what seemed like pure mockery though, the crusted chunks broke beneath her straining weight and dropped heavily at her feet. The effort was repeated over and over with the results remaining the same. She was getting nowhere, she realized angrily and with mounting frustration and agitation as she grabbed a chunk of crusted snow and sent it crashing somewhere out into the dense forest.

She stood and surveyed her snowy-white surroundings, suddenly aware of the fact that the hole of snow into which she had fallen was no mere hole any longer; instead, she was in what now looked like a room: a sizable room at that, and the snow beneath her feet held her weight up better. In her many attempts to free herself, she had done a remarkable job at packing the
powdery-white stuff beneath her feet, she realized appreciatively, as she tried to remain calm and not panic. She wished she could be calm, like Peter. Or Betsy. But no, with the slightest and the least provocation, the panic button inside her being started screaming and screeching its siren sound until Miss Calm slithered away into an obscure corner somewhere and became lost or forgotten.

At thought of Peter and Betsy, Allendra's anger rose again. How often must she remind herself that she was neither Peter nor Betsy? she wondered, stomping her foot on a chunk of the crusted snow that had broken off from the rim of her white prison.

Hearing the chunk shatter beneath her boot, Allendra realized that, had she not vented her angry in the first place and in the same manner while she was walking and making record time, she would not be a captive in the vast wilderness nor a prisoner in the deep snow room. It was her anger that caused her problem, not her father nor the move which his Company imposed upon him.

The thought shook her and almost sent her to the snow "floor" with weakness. Why was she always blaming others for her problems, and why hadn't she recognized this before now? she wondered, feeling wobbly and weak in her legs. Never once had she owned up to her many faults and sins. Never! Whatever ill befell her was always the fault or the making of her father or mother or Peter. More often than not, it was blamed upon Peter and her father.

Shaking and trembling with the realization of the wickedness of her heart and its equally wicked accusations, Allendra broke out in a cold, damp sweat. Why hadn't she honored her father and her mother like God's Word had admonished her to do in Exodus 20:12? she wondered with fear. It was dangerous to ignore and disregard God's Holy Word, she knew. Yet this was the very thing she had done, she realized with a sudden, keen awareness. Worse still, she had trampled it underfoot, like she had trampled and packed the snow beneath her feet. Was it possible that, like the hard-packed snow beneath her boots, her heart had become hard and set and callused by not heeding the Word?

Somewhere inside her being, a cold fear gripped her and took hold of her. It was frighteningly intense and real: so real, that it shook her and
caused her to tremble. Her attitude toward her father and brother and her despicable behavior was cause for alarm. What was it that made her so hateful and mean to them? What reason had she to treat them so unkindly and to all but despise them?

The questions floated across her brain like news on a screen; back and forth they went, seeming to demand answers. She couldn't get away from them: she was a prisoner of sorts in a snow-packed pit, or "room." Her freedom was bounded on all sides by the impenetrable wall of snow that refused to unlock its deep, white bars and give her passage out, or through. The questions became her tormentors; her accusers. What could she say?

Facing what she knew she could no longer run away from nor make excuses for or cast blame upon, Allendra knew that Betsy had targeted her to a T when she told her she was jealous of Peter. She was jealous of Peter, she acknowledged desolately now, as she walked back and forth in the depth of the snow, packing it still harder beneath her feet.

All these years, she suddenly realized, she had done the same thing to God's Word and to the sermons her pastor had preached so faithfully, and the prayers her parents and Peter had prayed for her. Yes, she had been trampling them underfoot, wanting to live life her way; trying desperately to push God aside so she could have a wider, broader stretch to do things the way she wanted to. Her parents stood in her way, however. Her father and Peter, especially. Their late-night prayers and groans and tears made her feel uncomfortable. Dreadfully so. The many things she thought she might try to do never became a reality, why? Her father's prayers and holy living, that's why. It was like bounds were set -- invisible bounds -- around which she could never get over, across or past. And she hated him for this?

A dreadful fear gripped her heart. She was exposed -- by the Holy Spirit.

"O God!" she cried aloud. "God, have mercy upon my soul! I can't believe how desperately wicked I have been!"

Allendra looked heavenward. Tears began flowing: tears that would not be stopped. Never before had she realized how exceedingly wicked she was. She was shocked into a silence so intense that she felt powerless and helpless beyond any describing. She hadn't associated wickedness with
dishonoring one's parents and having a desire to do things one's own way. She knew it wasn't pleasing to God and that it was wrong: but wicked?

Like flashing lights, scripture after scripture flashed before her: "All unrighteousness is sin: . . ." (I John 5:17).

All? Yes. Yes. The things she had thought were merely (?) wrong, were wicked, and were "unrighteousness," and were, therefore, sin!

Romans 1:18-20 sent its message startlingly across her mind: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

"Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. ". . .So that they are without excuse."

Fear gripped Allendra's heart. That same chapter, she recalled, stated, at least three different times, that God gave them up. Had she been so set in her way, and so determined not to obey God's Holy and Divinely-inspired Word, until He had given her up? She was so very self-willed; so stubborn! she acknowledged now. So wicked.

"My sin! My sin!" she cried aloud in despair. "I am the vilest of sinners!"

Tears ran down her cheeks. She was scared: what if God had given her up? She didn't deserve His mercy; nor His grace. She had trampled His Word underfoot, as it were. No, she didn't deserve His mercy. But, oh, how desperately she wanted it! Yearned for it, even!

"God," she cried brokenly, "have I gone too far? Am I beyond the reach of Your help? Your mercy? I've spurned Your love all these years, wanting the world and its pleasures and hardening my heart by resisting and rebelling. Is there room at the cross for one such as I? O God, please. . . ."

The hard heart was melting wondrously; melting beneath the searching, probing, revealing Word of God and the gentle woings and strivings of the Holy Ghost.

Totally oblivious of the bitter cold and of her snowy prison, Allendra prayed. How she prayed! And confessed -- her heinous sins of jealousy and
envy of Peter; because he was always tender and obedient and loved the Lord and served Him with a joyful heart and spirit. Jealous because Peter would soon be marrying Abigail Morris and together they would be leaving for a mission station abroad, to serve as doctor and a registered nurse on the compound. Jealous because Peter was always the same; never temperamental.

Her father and mother were next. And God. Oh, how she confessed and repented, pleading for mercy and pardon and forgiveness. Time was of no importance: she couldn't go anywhere anyhow. The Lord had her hedged in, literally. At last, He had gotten her attention. She was at the crossroads and she was facing a crisis; a crisis that would affect her for all eternity.

She prayed earnestly. Fervently. Victory came. Such glorious victory! And peace. Joy, too. Now she knew why Peter couldn't help but sing; knew too why he was always joyful and full of praise and thanksgiving. Oh, how she loved her brother! And her parents! And God!

Allendra's tears of godly sorrow and repentance were now turned into tears of joy and gratitude to the Lord for extending mercy and pardon to her when she didn't deserve it or merit it. Then she remembered something; something extremely important and necessary: without holiness no man would see the Lord. She must be cleansed of the awful--the dreadful-carnal nature, if she wanted to maintain her walk with God. And she did. Oh, how she did! She must be sanctified wholly! The carnal nature had to be extirpated; eradicated. It was so dreadful and wretchedly wicked that it was "not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). She wanted to be a victorious person -- like her parents and her brother were.

Allendra's prayer now began with praise, then she sought for deliverance from the old man of sin. She must be cleansed; purged; purified by the Holy Ghost and fire. It was God's will that she be sanctified wholly.

The forest became her chapel; the snow-pit her altar. Not to be denied, she prayed until she knew the blessed and sweet Holy Spirit had cleansed out every trace of inbred sin and had come to abide within her soul, filling her entire being with Divine Love and reigning supremely as King and Lord of her life. Oh, the blessedness of being dead unto sin and alive unto God! she thought, as she praised and blessed her Great Deliverer.
The verse from Isaiah 1:18 came to mind and Allendra quoted it aloud, her tear-stained eyes raised heavenward in adoration and praise: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Her long-imprisoned soul was now set free. Free! Oh, it was glorious and wonderful. No more was she bound. She was set free, by the blood of Jesus Christ. The Lord had done a miracle for her; a miracle in the snow. It was a marvelous and blessedly transforming miracle. She could scarcely wait to tell her parents and Peter.