Kayla sat on the edge of the bunk bed, not taking her eyes off the lizard that eyed her with its beady black-eyed stare from its perch on one of the two-by-fours that stretched above her in the cabin which she shared with six other campers. She was petrified with fear, and even though Mrs. Coffey, their cabin supervisor, had told her umpteen times already that the uninvited "visitor" was completely and absolutely harmless, Kayla couldn't seem to
relax nor calm her fears so long as she knew said creature shared the same
cabin in which she stayed. Suppose he fell down on her bed while she slept.
And worse still, suppose he crawled between her sheets and was there to
"greet" her when she went to bed!

Kayla shuddered. After all, the distance between them wasn't really
great, not when one slept on the top bunk like she did.

Neither moved. Kayla wished she could stare the thing into action. The
lizard, however, seemed in no hurry to do anything: he returned stare for
stare, like he was wondering what right she, Kayla, had to be in the cabin
with him.

"Kayla. Kayla, where are you? It's time for lunch," Mrs. Coffey's head
appeared in the doorway. "You missed the Bible lesson. Why? You know this
isn't allowed. . . ." Her sentence trailed.

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Coffey. I truly am. I didn't realize that I've sat here all
this time. I was reading my Bible when I detected a motion nearby and,
glancing upward, I saw the lizard again. Oh, Mrs. Coffey, I'm scared. He's
been up there all this time watching me. I'm scared stiff of him. What if he
jumps at me when I try to get off the bed! He looks . . . well . . . frightful. He
intimidates me and . . . and I'm afraid of him." Kayla was in tears. "Are there
lizards in all the cabins?" she asked quickly as she searched the kind
woman's face for an answer.

Mrs. Coffey walked over to the bed and said gently, "Come down,
Kayla; I'll see that the wizened little creature above you does you no harm
while you get off your 'perch.' And, again, believe me when I say that he is
totally harmless." The older woman sighed.

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Coffey. I really am. I want to believe you. Oh, how I do!
But when I see him staring at me I . . . I go to pieces and I'm afraid to move. I
should go home, I guess. I had no idea there'd be lizards in my cabin. We
never had lizards where we lived up north. I mean, they weren't in the houses
with us if they were around, even. Maybe there were some in the woods; I
don't know. But never, never in the cottages and cabins on our campground."

Mrs. Coffey put her arm around Kayla's shoulder and said softly, "But
you're in the south now, honey, and we have lizards galore down here. The
Lord made them just as surely as He made the song birds. These little creatures eat ever so many insects. You'll get used to having them around after a while, but come, we mustn't be late for lunch."

Kayla felt better when she had put some distance between the lizard and herself, and during the walk over to the dining room, with Mrs. Coffey's soft exclamations of joy over the exuberant singing of the birds, Kayla forgot about the black-eyed creature entirely as her attention was drawn to loftier things.

"Come sit with me, Kayla," it was Brittany. "I missed you in the Bible class," she added with a questioning look.

"Lizard mania," Kayla admitted with a shudder.

"Lizard mania?" Brittany asked as she laughed softly. "I guess I don't understand."

"I . . . I'm not used to sleeping or . . . or staying in the same room as . . . as lizards do."

Suddenly Brittany understood. Laughing and grabbing Kayla's hand, she said, "Once you get used to them you won't give them a second thought. They're kinda' cute, I think. Curious little creatures. I have one that seems to know when I go outside and sit on the lawn chair to read my Bible. Each morning, without fail, I see it. It climbs up Mother's clothesline post -- the one near to where I sit in the shade and read -- and there he stays, watching me. I talk to him. It. Maybe it's a lady lizard, who knows? At any rate, I'm convinced it likes to hear me talk to it. You should see how it cocks its head and stares at me while I speak softly to it."

"Oh, Brittany, aren't you scared? Not at all?" Kayla asked, feeling all goose bumpy.

"No, Kayla; not in the least. But of course I've lived among these little creatures all my life. After a while you'll kind of like them."

"Oh, no. No! They frighten me. Dreadfully so!"
"You'll have to get used to them if you go as a missionary," Brittany said kindly as she started through the cafeteria line. "Don't forget your tray, Kayla," she added when she saw Kayla following without a tray and the silverware on the tray.

"Sorry, Brittany. My mind's in a total and complete muddle since I saw Mr. or Mrs. Lizard eyeing me with 'undying love' this morning. It wasn't far from my head!" she added with another shudder.

"Love at first sight," Brittany teased, as she took a plastic bowl filled with a tossed salad and put it on her tray.

Kayla took a bowl of the same for herself, then gazed at the shrunken looking hot dogs. Nothing juicy looking about them, she thought, as she slid the tray down along the line behind Brittany.

"Hey, where's your hot dog?" Brittany asked as she turned and saw only the salad on Kayla's tray. "I passed it up."

"You'll be sorry," Brittany declared. "It's protein, and you'll need that before supper." Calling to Mellodie Cramm who served the hot dogs, Brittany said, "Please give Kayla a hot dog. Thanks Mel. Kayla's new here and she's not aware how hungry one can get between meals."

Mellodie smiled at Kayla. "New? Say, we're glad to have you," she said pleasantly and sincerely. "If we can help you in any way, let us know. We're here to help each other on our journey to Heaven."

Kayla smiled. "Thanks, Mellodie," she said.

"The macaroni and cheese is good," Brittany said as Kayla pushed her tray past it.

Kayla paused long enough to order a small portion. A glass of milk and a dried out hot dog bun completed her meal.

After praying and giving thanks for the food, she tossed the blue cheese dressing over her salad and began eating it. The hot dog seemed to stare back at her with its wilted, shrunken-looking wrinkled form. Brittany
Kayla forked the hot dog between her bun and opened a packet of relish, then squeezed it over the shriveled looking thing. It didn't taste half bad, she soliloquized as she ate it. It was nothing at all like the big fat, juicy-plump ones her mother sometimes steamed for a quick lunch, she thought, as she took a bite of the macaroni and cheese too. Where was the cheese in the macaroni? she wondered, as she pushed it around on her plate now.

Brittany glanced down at Kayla's plate. "Ten minutes more," she said, reminding Kayla that soon the lunch period would be over. "It's a full afternoon," she added. "Missionary speaker and all."

Kayla had forgotten about the missionary who was to be there from Brazil or Honduras or wherever. She certainly didn't want to miss that. Not at all. After all, she had felt she wanted to go as a missionary someday.

She finished eating the hot dog, leaving most of the bun on her plate as well as the rest of the macaroni and cheese.

Hurrying into the tabernacle with Brittany and a group of other girls, she sat on the second row of seats from the front. She wanted to hear all the missionary had to say and see all the displays that the missionary had set up and spread out across the front of the tabernacle. Scarcely was she seated until the gentle breezes that hopscotched through the rapidly filling up tabernacle wafted odors to her nose. Ugh! How utterly offensive they were!

Kayla took a tissue from the small purse and held it over her nose. Then she saw the girls in the pew in front of her. They were dirty and their dresses looked like they had never been ironed. Were they ever washed, even? she wondered, as she pinched the tissue more tightly over her nose. Their hair was filthy looking and matted and greasy. Had it ever been shampooed or brushed or combed? she wondered as another breeze wafted the sickeningly-dirty odors back to her.

Nausea washed over her. She felt ill. But she had to hear the missionary; yes she did. She wouldn't miss it for anything. Opening the little purse again, she found the small bottle of perfume and dabbed just a drop on
the tissue, hoping its subtle floral fragrance would offset the pungent, obnoxious odor.

   The girls on the front pew turned around and smiled at her. They were pretty, Kayla noticed. If only they were clean and more neat, she thought.

   All through the preliminaries of the service Kayla's tissue served as a "filter" from the obnoxious odors. If Brittany noticed, or minded the stench, she gave no inkling of it. Kayla wished she could be more like Brittany.

   Suddenly, the missionary was being introduced. Kayla was surprised how young looking he was. Instantly, she forgot about the girls on the seat in front of her; forgot, too, about the awful odors being wafted her way by the warm, playful breezes that seemed delighted to slip back and forth through the open doors of the tabernacle.

   "I am sorry that my wife isn't here beside me," the missionary stated seriously. "We are a team, Mrs. Brandies and I. I had to leave her in Minneapolis with our daughter, who is undergoing serious and extensive testing for a disease Rachael contracted on the field just before furlough time. Rachael is five. The Lord has used this little child in numerous ways to reach souls for Jesus. Please pray that the doctors here in the States will be able to help her and to heal her, if this is God's will, which both Mrs. Brandies and I feel it is.

   "Life as a missionary is blessed and wonderful when one knows he is where God wants him to be, even though the food is different and strange and insects and poisonous snakes are numerous and everywhere, it seems. You think you have lizards and roaches here: you should see ours! And it's nothing to discover a big brown roach cooked up in your food when you are out calling in the home and are invited to eat with the family. And of course, you do not offend your hostess, so you push Mr. Roach beneath your rice and down goes protein and all."

   Kayla shuddered. She had seen enough roaches since her family moved South to do her for the rest of her life. Big, brown, fat looking things they were, and they scared her dreadfully. The only thing that scared her even more than the roaches were the big, round spiders that ate the roaches. And, of course, the lizards. Again she shuddered.
"To be used of God and to win those to whom you are sent," Rev. Brandies was saying, "one must be dead to self and all its likes and dislikes and alive unto God. Only those who are truly sanctified wholly and have presented themselves a living sacrifice unto God, those who have crucified the flesh with all its lusts, desires, and passions, its likes and dislikes, will ever make it on the mission field!

Kayla listened intently. Her heart hammered inside her chest. Suddenly she knew what she must do. She wasn't dead to Kayla. She saw it plainly now. Jesus not only loved the lepers, He touched them, loathsome though the disease was. And she, Kayla, could hardly stand the girls sitting in front of her because of their dirty dresses, their offensive body odors and their uncombed, unkempt hair. How sad the Lord Jesus must be over her attitude toward the girls, whose souls were every bit as precious to Him as hers was. How disappointed He must be over her pickiness of food!

Kayla was the first one to go to the altar when the missionary asked if there was anyone who was willing to follow Christ in a total death to self and then present himself as a candidate for missionary service should the Lord so desire. Nor was she disappointed. The Lord came down sweetly in sanctifying power, filling her entire being with Divine Love and purifying her heart by faith.

In a rush of holy joy and ecstasy, she hurried back to the girls on the front seat and threw her arms around them. Oh, how she loved them! It was marvelous and amazing. Amazing indeed!