

Road to Virginia

by Cammie Corlas Quinn

On a warm summer night, my husband, our two children, my mother, and I boarded a train for a one-week vacation in Virginia. As much as I enjoy vacations, I needed this to be more than a vacation. My soul was troubled by an inner battle—one of the many varieties that torment Christians from time to time. I knew the battle would still be waiting for me when I returned home. I needed to bring back more than a typical souvenir. I needed a message from God.

The week flew by. We toured historic sites and enjoyed the seashore. On the last day, we hauled our luggage to the Charlottesville, Virginia Amtrak station and prepared to begin our journey back to Illinois. The train wasn't leaving for another 90 minutes, so we decided to walk to a nearby outdoor mall. I volunteered to stay behind to watch our luggage. I was prepared with a good novel in hand.



Soon after my family left, a stranger three chairs down from me began talking. Jennifer introduced herself, made small chat, and then got down to business.

For no apparent reason, she told me her life story. She was physically assaulted at age 14, abused in college by an escaped murderer who held her hostage, and bereaved by the suicide of a cousin. Today, she works as a home health care provider for elderly patients. Her dream is to become a caregiver for AIDS-infected babies. On the surface, Jennifer and I were about as different as day and night.

Jennifer had a few rough edges. She offered more graphic details than I cared to hear. I thought about cutting her short by burying my head in my book, but I was seeking answers on this trip. She soon drifted into a description of her own inner battle. To my utter surprise, I realized it was the same battle as mine. As if she could read my mind, she explained how God helped her overcome it.

Jennifer's words were as uncanny and as comforting to me as if Jesus had appeared personally to answer my questions. My heart turned somersaults. *God knew! God knew! And He was speaking to me!* Jennifer ended by saying, "After all the bad things that have happened to me, there's one thing I've decided. Life is still worth living. God is good. I am happy. I am so happy."

Somehow during her long-winded monologue, I slipped in a few sentences about a former health trial of my own. She gasped. "How did you know?" she asked. She was traveling by train to visit a dying uncle. She looked at me as if *I* were the messenger that day.

Foreign ground is an ideal place to encounter God. Often He uses "unknowns" as messengers. They are not clothed with too much familiarity or encumbered with known faults

that can tend to obscure the message. Just as solitude is prime territory to see God, journeys are unsullied stages to encounter God's messengers.

I am glad God still sends messengers today. May I open my eyes to see them in all places and all packages.

And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? (Luke 24:32 KJV)