

Southbound

by Harry B. Sanderford

Maggie leaned her forehead against the cool glass of the Greyhound bus window. *Over the river and through the woods*, she thought watching the snow west of Interstate 95 melt away into skinny pines and palmettos.

Brunswick 2, Jacksonville 70, slid by riding a green rectangle.

It had been fifteen years since she'd been south of Atlanta, twenty since she'd been home. *A lifetime*, she thought shifting position to stretch her legs. As a young girl her curiosity and ambition had been far too great to be contained in any small town. Maggie grabbed her diploma, loaded her Corolla and left Middleburg and everyone in it behind like shoes that no longer fit, to run barefoot out into the world. At Interstate 10 she'd flipped a coin to choose between Hollywood and New York City. Heads, the Big Apple. Tails, Tinsel Town.

Heads it was, so she stayed on 95 North and headed for the Empire City. She did ok there too. Better than most. A pretty girl and smarter than some, she found work right away. She modeled for catalogs at first. An agent spotted her in J.C. Penney *Ready To Wear* and soon a couple of local commercials, then a part in a sitcom pilot came her way. From there, she was off and running.

The good life came easy, but it did not come free.

Big Talbot Island State Park, I-10 Baldwin, MacLennay 2

Maggie arched her back and rolled her head side to side working out a kink. She'd been to so many exciting new places and met so many new people. She'd fallen in and out of love maybe a time or two more than she cared to recall. In the end, how much of it really

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mattered? Her name was short for Magnolia, not Margaret like most would guess. All those winters spent with the terribly cool and sometimes down-right cold had taught her one thing. Not every tree is meant to drop its leaves and stand stoically awaiting the arrival of spring.

Lakeside, Middleburg 3

Florida was a coin she tossed. How could it now be burning a hole in her pocket? The closer she got, the more she just missed home. She wondered how home would feel about her. She had not called ahead so nobody met her at the depot. It wasn't so far now. She picked up her suitcase to walk the last leg of her journey down the dirt road that led home. At the crossroads where her daddy's property began, she sat down on her suitcase and lit a cigarette. Maggie had seen the foot-lights on Broadway, the bright lights of Time Square on New Year's Eve, and surely the lights of Paris brought a tear to her eye, but it was a thousand feet of Christmas lights strung on a barbed wire fence in the middle of nowhere Florida, that finally made her break down and cry.

