

Retold from public records

In the shabby basement of an old house in Atlanta, Georgia, lived a young widow and her little girl. During the Civil War, she had married a young Confederate soldier, against her Yankee father's will, and had moved with him south, to Atlanta. Her wealthy father, angry and hurt at what he considered to be her disloyalty, both to him and the North, told her never to come back.

The soldier had died bravely during the war, and his death left his wife and child without any support. Alone in Atlanta, Margaret did washing, ironing, and other menial jobs that she could find to help her scrape by and feed little Anna. Their clothes became ragged, and they were both ill from sleeping in the damp, cold basement.

Anna loved to hear her mother's stories about her home in the North. She sat in her mother's lap and listened for hours to descriptions of the big, brick house in Boston, the sprawling shade trees, the beautiful flower gardens, and the wide grassy lawn. She loved to imagine the horses trotting across the meadow, the smell of bread baking in the kitchen, and the soft feel of the four-poster feather beds. Although Anna had never seen her mother's home, she thought it must be marvelous and secretly hoped that someday they would go there to live.

Margaret often sat looking wistfully up through the narrow basement windows at the blue sky, remembering her mama's smile, laughing with her two sisters, chasing her little brother, and sitting on her father's lap. She missed her family and home so much. But there was nothing she could do. She could never earn enough money to pay the train fare to Boston, no matter how hard she worked. And when she remembered her father's hurt, angry expression when she left, she knew there was little hope of ever seeing her family again.

On Christmas Eve, the landlady of the house knocked on the basement door. Anna ran to answer, and the lady handed her a letter. Margaret knew immediately that the broadly scrawled handwriting on the envelope was her father's. With trembling fingers she pulled open the flap of the envelope.

When she pulled out the single-sheet letter, two one-hundred dollar bills fell out on the floor. The letter had just three words: "Please come home."

God call to us is "***Come Home. I have paid your way---just come.***"

[Not for a date, but for a wedding.]