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CIVIL WAR

BOOK 1

WEDDED *to* WAR

JOCELYN GREEN

MOODY PUBLISHERS

CHICAGO



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Monday, April 22, 1861
New York City

When Charlotte and Alice told their mother they were taking the omnibus down Broadway, they weren't lying. They just didn't tell her where they would be getting off. There was simply no time for an argument today.

Boarding at Fourteenth Street, the sisters paid the extra fare for their hoop skirts, as if they were separate passengers, and sat back on the long wooden bench for the ride.

"This is against my better judgment, you know." Alice's voice was barely audible above the clatter of wheels and hoof beats over the cobblestones.

"Don't you mean Jacob's?" Charlotte cast a sidelong glance at her sister.

Alice twirled a ringlet of her honey-blonde hair around her finger—a nervous childhood habit she never outgrew—but said nothing.

She didn't have to. Ever since she had married the wealthy businessman a few months ago, she had been even more pampered—and sheltered—than she had been growing up. Heaven help her when they reached their destination.

"I'll have you home by teatime and none the worse for wear." Charlotte's voice was softened by just a hint of guilt. "I promise."

The omnibus wheels jolted over a broken cobblestone, bouncing the passengers on their benches. Releasing her grip from the edge of the bench, Alice raised an eyebrow at her sister. "Just tell me why I let you talk me into coming."

Charlotte grinned. "I've got an idea."

"Why do I have the feeling it isn't a good one?" Alice planted her palms on the bench beside her again, bracing herself against the jarring ride.

"Whatever you do you mean?"

"Do you remember your idea to adopt that lame squirrel we found?"

"I did let it go." And there were more important things on Charlotte's mind. She squinted at the front page of *The New York Times* held up by the man seated across from her. *Washington Still Isolated—New York Seventh Regiment Arrives in Annapolis by Steam—*

"Only after it chewed through five of Mother's best doilies and made a nest in the velvet armchair."

Charlotte turned from reading headlines to face her sister. "I was ten!"

"And I was eight, and still old enough to know better. There were other times, too, like when you chose that outrageous reading on the value of a woman's education to recite for our class at finishing school. Completely at odds with the context of the school."

Charlotte chuckled. "Exactly why it was so perfect! But today's idea is even better. I've found a way to actually *do* something for the war effort."

"And what do you call knitting socks for the troops? Rolling

bandages? Doesn't that mean anything?"

"Of course it does. But I mean something else. Something *more*."

Alice's eyes narrowed, but she let it rest as the omnibus slowed to a halt and more passengers squeezed beside the sisters. Any further conversation would soon be drowned out by the cacophony of Broadway.

The avenue throbbed with life, like an artery coursing down the island of Manhattan. Ten days into the war, recruiting offices for the Union army had already cropped up along the avenue, their entrances clogged with eager young men. Between Canal Street and Houston, the street teemed with gentlemen in spats and ladies in silks, their musk colognes and lavender perfumes cloying on the warm breeze. The white marble façade of St. Nicholas Hotel between Broome and Spring Streets dominated the west side of Broadway. In front of The Marble Palace facing Canal Street, porters in their brass-buttoned, blue uniforms opened carriage doors and escorted their elite customers inside, where they would no doubt spend staggering sums on the latest Parisian fashions.

But Charlotte and Alice did not get off at any of these places. At least not today. For just a few blocks south of The Marble House, and just a few blocks east of the German-Jewish secondhand clothing shops on lower Broadway, the steady pulse of polished society gave way to the erratic beat of Five Points, the world's most notorious slum.

Alice squeezed her sister's hand so tightly Charlotte couldn't tell if it was motivated by anxiety or anger for bringing her here.

If Broadway was Manhattan's artery, Five Points was its abscess: swollen with people, infected with pestilence, inflamed with vice and crime. Grogeries, brothels, and dance halls put private sin on public display. Although the neighborhood seemed fairly self-contained, more fortunate New Yorkers were terrified of Five Points erupting, spreading its contagion to the rest of them.

This was where the Waverly sisters got off.

Competing emotions of fear and excitement tugged at Charlotte's heart as she hoisted the skirt of her amber-colored day dress above her ankles and began heading toward Worth Street. "Come on, Alice," she

whispered, cocking her head at her dumbstruck sister. A foul-smelling breeze teased strands of hair from their coifs, crept into their noses, and coated their throats. Charlotte had forgotten how the smell of poverty would stick to her skin. Swallowing her distaste, she vowed to scrub herself with sugar and lemon-infused olive oil as soon as she returned home.

Pressing a violet-scented handkerchief to her nose, Alice held her parasol low over her head, blocking out as much of the view as possible as she began walking. “Where are we going?” Her words were muffled, but her discomfort was not.

A disheveled drunk leered at the sisters from a rotting doorway, raising the hair on Charlotte’s neck. “The House of Industry. It’s just up ahead.”

With her parasol in one hand and a fistful of skirts in the other, Charlotte set a brisk pace. As they turned onto Worth Street’s littered sidewalk, Alice skirted a child leaning against a lamppost, hawking apples from a broken crate. Charlotte stopped short.

“Maggie?” She reached out and touched the girl’s soot-smudged cheek while Alice gawked from five feet away. “It’s me, Miss Waverly! I used to teach your mother sewing. How is she?”

Maggie peered up with eyes too big for her face, too old for her nine years. “About the same as usual—only there’s not enough sewing to go around, she says—so Jack sweeps the streets and here I am. Say, wouldn’t you and the miss over there like a nice red apple?”

“Of course!” Charlotte reached into her dress pocket and traded several coins for two small, bruised apples smelling of fermentation.

“Charlotte!” Alice gasped while Maggie’s dirty face brightened. It was far too much money to spend on apples—especially rotting ones.

“Go on now, Maggie. Give your mother my best.”

With “Bless you Miss!” ringing in her ears, Charlotte joined Alice with both apples in one hand, skirt now dragging on the sidewalk.

“Can we hustle, please?” Alice’s voice was still muted behind her handkerchief. Charlotte was eager to comply. Virtually every tipsy

wooden building on this block—including Crown’s Grocery—housed a brothel, and none of them bothered hiding the fact. Bareheaded and bare-chested women stood in doorways quoting their rates to passersby, even in broad daylight—which was a dirty yellow, like a fevered complexion. By the time they stepped into the slanted shadow of the six-story House of Industry, Charlotte noticed she had been holding her breath. The vapors in this area could truly make one sick.

“Ah, there you are!” Mr. Lewis Pease, founder of the charity, had been waiting for them in the shade of the brick building, and now waved the sisters inside, away from the seedy, star-shaped intersection for which Five Points was named, half a block away. “And who is this lovely young woman?”

“Forgive me, this is my younger sister Alice—Mrs. Jacob Carlisle.” Charlotte and Alice entered the building ahead of Mr. Pease, who closed the door behind them. “She’s in town visiting for a spell while her husband is away on business.” She set the apples down on the hall stand and wiped her gloves on her skirt.

Pease bowed slightly. “A pleasure to meet you, madam. Mr. Dorsheimer is already here,” he added in a whisper just as the visitor’s barrel chest entered the room ahead of him. “Ah, Mr. Treasurer. Allow me to make the introductions. Miss Waverly, Mrs. Carlisle, this is Mr. Phillip Dorsheimer, Treasurer of the State of New York and the New York State Military Board. He’s here all the way from Buffalo, and we’re so fortunate he’s making time to meet with us.” Mr. Dorsheimer ignored Charlotte’s outstretched hand, fading both her smile and her confidence.

Mr. Pease continued. “Mr. Treasurer, Miss Waverly here was the one who suggested we make a bid for the contract. She used to be a sewing instructor here.”

Without even the slightest acknowledgment, Mr. Dorsheimer frowned at his pocket watch. “Can we get on with it?” His jowls quivered as he spoke. Charlotte took a deep breath and squeezed her parasol handle. So far, this was not going as she had hoped it would.

A thin smile tipped Mr. Pease's lips. "Yes, quite. I'd like to give you a tour of the facility before discussing the terms of the uniform contract. Unless you've been here before?"

Mr. Dorsheimer cleared his throat. "Oh, I've been to the Points before, but not here in this building." Of course. Well-to-do New Yorkers often came down to see Five Points for themselves to satisfy a macabre curiosity. "Well, allow us to show you around," said Mr. Pease, leading the way. "This is a fairly new headquarters for us, and we're rather proud of it. This corridor leads to the workshops where neighborhood teens and adults learn several trades. At first we taught only basic sewing, but now we also teach baking, shoemaking, corset making, basket weaving, and millinery. Go ahead, look around."

Mr. Dorsheimer tossed cursory glances into a few of the workshops.

"We have more than five hundred workers currently. Five hundred!" Mr. Pease beamed. "I pay the workers according to what they produce. Sewers can earn up to \$2.50 a week—now I know that doesn't sound like much to you and me, Mr. Treasurer, but it's a lot more than needlewomen normally earn. We've also opened a day school for the children so they are educated, fed, and even clothed while the parents work at their trades here."

They walked a little farther and turned into a large open room. "This is the chapel where we hold religious services," Mr. Pease continued. "Of course there is also the Five Points Mission just across the street, whose primary objective is to feed the souls and point them to new life in Christ. The House of Industry began as a branch of the Mission, because I found they had a hard time hearing the Bible when their stomachs were growling. And what better way to feed the multitudes than to teach them a trade so they can feed themselves?"

If Mr. Dorsheimer felt anything, he hid it well in those doughy folds of skin. The palms of Charlotte's gloves began to dampen with sweat.

"One last thing I'd like to show you." Climbing a set of stairs brought them to a well-ventilated floor with spacious dormitories, each

with iron beds that termites couldn't penetrate. "We started out housing our worker women, so they wouldn't need to go back to the brothels at night. But now we also shelter dozens of abused, neglected, and homeless children who are waiting for adoptive parents."

Mr. Dorsheimer, winded from the exertion of the climb, did not look impressed.

"These rooms are humble enough, indeed," Charlotte added, "but when you consider many of these people are used to sleeping on the bare floor of a room with no windows and laid out like sardines in a can, you can understand the charm of a bed and some—air, can't you?" Calling it "fresh air" would have been a lie. With human waste collecting in trenches behind most Five Points tenements, no air had been fresh here for decades. At least windows allowed circulation.

Dorsheimer glanced at his pocket watch again, a scowl sagging on his face. "This is all very well and good," he huffed, "but can we get to the bottom line? How much would it cost to give you the contract? I need twelve thousand uniforms, and I need them as quickly as possible."

Mr. Pease turned to Charlotte. "Yes, of course," she said. "We propose a payment from the state's Military Board of thirteen cents per shirt, so that would be a total of \$1,560.00. Total." She bit her lip.

"Fifteen hundred dollars?"

Charlotte stole a glance at Mr. Pease. *Was that a lot? Or not very much?*

"Fifteen hundred *sixty* dollars, sir. To be precise. Plus, you'd supply the flannel and buttons," she said.

"I need more than just shirts, miss." Dorsheimer's tone was sharp, biting. "I need trousers, jackets, and overcoats, too, and I need it all in three weeks. Twelve thousand sets. And *you* provide the material. Not me. Do I look like I'm in the garment business?"

Alice's eyes widened into large pools of cornflower blue. Charlotte's narrowed into slits.

"Twelve thousand complete uniforms in three weeks. I wish I could

say we could do that, Mr. Dorsheimer, but you're asking for a huge sum on an extremely short deadline. Not only can we not perform miracles, but I doubt any single company in New York could do a satisfactory job under your specifications."

"I'm sure if we joined together with a few other sewing organizations, we could do it," said Charlotte, swiveling between Mr. Pease and Mr. Dorsheimer. "But we need a little more time to make the arrangements. This contract would mean a great deal to the House of Industry and to the workers in a financial sense, but it would also be a perfect way they could serve their country and their fighting men at war. You could be guaranteed of fine quality products made by conscientious workers."

"Not possible. The boys are going to war, and they need to be clothed."

"Mr. Dorsheimer, please. Consider the greater value of giving a charity the contract. The House of Industry has made a profound impact on Five Points, rescuing people from poverty—and the immorality that sometimes goes with it—and helping them walk a better road."

Mr. Dorsheimer raised a hand to stop her, but she didn't slow down.

"I'm sure you know President Lincoln came to Five Points just last year, just before his Cooper Union speech that launched him toward the presidency. And what did he choose to see in Five Points? Not the brothels or grogeries, but the House of Industry."

"Miss—" He tried again, but she couldn't stop.

"Maggie's mother, and dozens like her, needed this contract. Sir, the good work we do here inside these walls is becoming even more famous than the degradation outside of them. Invest in the House of Industry with this uniform contract, Mr. Dorsheimer, and you'll be getting the products you want and doing society a favor at the same time."

At the end of her speech now, Charlotte caught her breath; Alice stared at her in disbelief. No one said a word until Mr. Dorsheimer jabbed a stubby finger at Charlotte.

“My responsibility, young woman, is to the State of New York, not to your pet project here in the slums.”

Charlotte’s face burned as she, Alice, and Mr. Pease watched Mr. Dorsheimer trudge out of the building, taking her hope with her.

“It was worth a try, Miss Waverly,” Mr. Pease said.

Alice leveled her gaze at Charlotte. “Another good idea, right Charlotte?”

Frustration swelled in Charlotte’s chest. “Why? Why would you say such a thing? It was a brilliant idea! It made so much sense!”

“Charlotte, when will you ever realize that not everyone sees the world as you do? You act so surprised when others disagree with you, when you are the one stepping out of the range of normal.”

Charlotte crossed her arms tightly across her waist. “You used to look up to me.” Her throat grew tight with the unshed tears of bitter disappointment. “You used to believe in me.”

Alice laid a tentative hand on Charlotte’s arm. “I believe your intentions are good. But once again, you spoke too boldly. Perhaps if you had not been so vehement with your outburst, Mr. Dorsheimer would at least have considered giving you the contract.” Alice sighed, resignation in her eyes. “You must—you *must*—know your place, dear sister, or one of these days, you will stand to lose much more than a sewing contract.”

Charlotte opened her mouth to deny it, but could make no reply.

Heroines Behind the Lines

CIVIL WAR

BOOK 2

**WIDOW *of*
GETTYSBURG**

JOCELYN GREEN

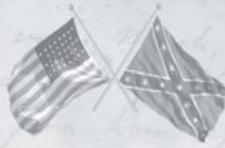
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CHICAGO



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Chapter One

The Holloway Farm, Adams County, Pennsylvania
Friday, June 26, 1863

*S*hhhhh. Someone's coming." Liberty Holloway cocked her head toward the window as the muffled rhythm of hoofbeats rose above of the drumming rain. "Rebels?" The word sat, bitter, on her tongue as her fists sank deeper into the bread dough she'd been kneading. They had taken enough from her already, long before a single Confederate soldier had set foot in the North. Were they now here to raid her property as well?

"Traveler, looks like." Bella Jamison wiped her hands on her flour-dusted apron and peered between the curtains without parting them. "Wet and hungry, I'll wager. You know Black Horse Tavern and Inn down the road are full up right now, and you just hung that sign out by the road last week."

Libbie exhaled, her pulse matching her fear. Though she was a grown woman of nineteen years, she had yet to tame her runaway imagination.

But perhaps her hired help was right, and a traveler would be welcome, provided he could pay in greenbacks.

“Then again, we just can’t know for sure.” Bella backed away from the window, her coffee-with-cream complexion darkening in the shadows. “Rebels don’t always have proper uniforms, you know. I only see one on the road, but there could be more coming.”

Serves me right for not heeding Governor Curtin’s proclamation. Libbie pulled her hands from the sticky dough and went to the window herself. “If he doesn’t break into a gallop, we’ll have just enough time.”

Before the words had left her mouth, Bella had already moved the worktable away from the bricked-in fireplace and slid out several loose bricks. The cast-iron stove and oven served for their baking and cooking, but the summer kitchen’s walk-in fireplace still had its purpose. Together, they hurriedly filled the space to keep their stores out of sight: jars of molasses, peach and strawberry preserves, applesauce, tomatoes, and sacks of potatoes, onions, flour, and oats.

Drip. Drip. Drip. The leak in the corner marked time like a metronome as water dropped into a tin pie plate on the floor. Soon, all that was left was the freshly baked rye bread cooling on the sideboard, the abandoned lump of dough, and bunches of parsley and oregano hanging from the rafters to dry.

After replacing the bricks and the table in front of it, Liberty stole another glance out the window. “We can still hide the horses. Make haste.” Resolve pierced through her anxiety as she hung her apron on a wooden peg and stepped out into the rain with Bella close on her heels.

Hurrying into the barn, Libbie swished her skirts to scatter the clucking chickens in their path. The horses, Daisy and Romeo, twitched their tails as the women bridled them, then led them past the summer kitchen and into the great hall of the two-story stone farmhouse.

“We’ll be fine here.” Bella stroked Romeo’s withers to calm him. “Remember, you are the lady of this house. Stand your ground.”

“If it’s a Rebel—”

“I can take care of myself. Go.”

The hoofbeats grew louder outside. Liberty patted the thick, black braid that circled her head and hurried over to Major, the 140-pound Newfoundland sprawled on the rug inside the front door.

“Wake up, boy. Time to look menacing,” she said as she buried her hand in the scruff of his massive neck. Not that he could hear anything. “Come on, Major.” She hooked a finger under his collar and tugged. Groaning, he lumbered to his feet, yawned, and turned his head slightly to wink at her with his one good eye.

“Come, he’s almost here,” she whispered, and immediately regretted her choice of words. *I could swear that dog can read lips!* Major perked up and jumped at the door. “No, Major, not Levi.” She shook her head. “No Levi.”

Liberty led Major out onto the porch and pointed to the splitting wooden floorboards beside her. “Sit.” He obeyed. Wild roses the color of lemonade hugged the porch from all sides, lifting their faces to catch their drink. Their heady fragrance infused the air as a man on a gaunt horse rode up the lane to Libbie’s dooryard in no particular hurry, as if it weren’t raining at all, as if the shelter of a covered porch didn’t stand right in front of him. Feeling a pull on her skirt, she glanced down to find Major sitting sideways on one of his haunches, leaning against her leg. *So much for my canine protector.*

The stranger drew rein and dismounted his horse with graceful ease. A rain-soaked denim shirt and brown woolen trousers revealed a lean, muscular body, the kind that was used to work. A farmer perhaps? Carpenter? *Or a soldier.*

“You don’t look like a Rebel.” The words escaped her without thought.

So did Major. Before she could stop him, he ambled down the steps to the dooryard and slammed right into the man, stumbled back a little, then nuzzled his big furry black head under the man’s hand. Liberty sighed. Major’s sense of balance was lacking since he’d lost his eye.

The man bent to scratch Major behind the ears and on the white patch on his chest. “I take that as a compliment, ma’am.” His accent was

Northern, a blessed relief. Straightening again, he doffed his felt hat and bowed slightly before appraising her with moss green eyes. Rain darkened his hair to the color of polished oak and coursed down his stubbled cheeks. He took a step forward. "Miss Liberty?"

"How did you—"

"The sign by the road. Liberty Inn." He rubbed his horse's nose before glancing up at her again. "I'm guessing you might be Miss Liberty?"

Liberty spun the thin gold band around her finger. "Yes." She hoped he would not also guess how very new this venture was. She had three rooms ready for guests on the first floor of the farmhouse, each complete with quilts stitched by her own hand, but not one had yet been used.

"You've lost someone." His voice was quiet, tentative, but for all the world, Liberty could not think why. Two years into the war, women in mourning were a common sight. She crossed her arms across the pleated waist of her faded black dress and wished she had at least worn her hoops under her skirt this morning. She never did while doing chores, they got in the way so much. But now, the way he looked at her, she felt practically naked without them. "You'll forgive me if I ask you to kindly state your business, sir." She caught Major's eye and stabbed her finger at the porch floor again until the dog returned to her side.

He cleared his throat and offered a smile. "I'm a long way from home, and I sure could use a little hospitality."

"Do you mean to say that you need a room?"

"I have neither time nor money for a room, but my bread basket's been empty for quite a spell." He laid a hand on his stomach. "Could you spare anything for me to eat?"

She sighed. Times were tight at Holloway Farm, but she'd never been very good at saying no, to anyone. "Your mount looks as though he could eat something too." She led them both to the barn where the horse could eat hay and oats, then took the stranger into the summer kitchen. Twenty feet behind the house, this was the small outbuilding where she did most cooking, baking, preserving, and laundry during

the hottest season of the year. It would serve to feed a stranger without allowing him into the house.

“Sit there.” She pointed to the rough-hewn table butting up against the old fireplace and crossed the room to slice a loaf cooling on the sideboard. Major spread himself out to dry on the floor in front of the warm stove, the smells of wet dog and fresh bread thickening the air.

When Libbie turned back to the table, she found the man still standing. He shrugged, his hat still in his hands. “I never sit when a lady still stands. Won’t you join me? Or do you mean to make me stand while I eat alone, like a common beggar?” His smile dissolved any argument on the tip of her tongue, and she allowed him to seat her at the worktable, her face flooding with warmth that did not come from the oven. Even Levi’s manners had not gone this far. But to be fair, Libbie had not expected it. Aunt Helen had raised her to believe that manners were not meant to be wasted on the likes of her. Liberty swallowed. She should not think anything uncharitable of the dead. Either of them.

The man’s stomach growled as she set the loaf of rye on the table, yet he made no move for it. “Are you waiting for me to serve you?” The question sounded more prickly than she intended.

“Ladies first.” He nodded at the bread. “You baked it. You should be the first to enjoy it.”

“Well, you certainly don’t act like a beggar,” Libbie admitted as she helped herself to a steaming piece.

“Wouldn’t Mama be proud.” He laughed, but a shadow passed over his face. He took a slice for himself then, but before taking a bite, bowed his head for a moment.

Then he ate. And ate—until the loaf was gone.

Finally, when the last crumb had disappeared, he leaned back in his chair and raked a hand through his hair. “I haven’t been full in a very long time. Thank you, ma’am.”

She nodded and stood, and so did he.

“It doesn’t suit me to take something for nothing, though.” He flicked a glance at the water dimpling in the pie plate. “I can fix that for you.”

“You needn’t trouble yourself.”

“Your husband certainly didn’t.” He dropped his gaze to the ring she twisted on her finger. “Perhaps he is away.”

“Quite. He’s dead.” Libbie bit her tongue in punishment for its bluntness.

His eyes softened. “I do beg your pardon. I meant no disrespect.”

“I can get along just fine by myself.” Liberty dropped her voice. “This is my property, and—”

“Yours?”

Libbie blinked. Most likely, he thought her too young to own property. “Yes, mine. So I should manage it myself. It wouldn’t do to let you spoil me.”

One eyebrow hitched up as he looked down at her. “Every woman deserves to be taken care of every now and then, no matter how capable you are.” An easy smile curved his lips. “I’d consider it a pleasure to help.”

“That isn’t necessary.” To be alone with a man, even for this long—it was almost indecent. Liberty hoped the warmth she felt in her face did not color her cheeks.

“Necessary? Neither was your sharing your bread with me. But courtesy, kindness, and good manners are all necessary now more than ever.”

“Thank you kindly, but I’m sure you have some place to be. God-speed on your journey.” She waited for him to take his leave. But, rolling the brim of his hat in his hands, he remained planted in the doorway. Rain fell on the ground behind him, speckling his trousers with tiny flecks of mud.

“I am sorry for your loss, truly.” His eyes probed her face, and she wondered if she looked sorry for her loss, too. Or just guilty. “How long’s it been? Since your husband died.”

She swallowed. “Since the Battle of Bull Run. The first.”

“Almost two years. You should be out of mourning soon.”

Liberty stiffened. “If I so choose. Some widows wear black for the

rest of their lives." *Will I forever be told what to do?*

"And bury yourself with the dead? I can't imagine that kind of life for you."

Liberty stared at him. "I can't imagine why in heaven's name you—a perfect stranger—feel compelled to even comment on such a private matter! It's not your place to judge." She turned her back and pummeled the bread dough she'd left on the sideboard earlier that morning.

"There's enough death in this war as it is, ma'am." His tone was tender, not spiteful. As hers had been. "Just when do you plan to come on back to the land of the living? There's so much more to life than death, you know. Sure would hate for you to miss out on it."

An unwelcome tingle ran down her spine. "It's not your concern." She pounded the dough again.

"Just remember what I said. There is more to life than death. Whatever happens. There is more."

"You speak in riddles."

"You'll see soon enough." He stepped outside, and Liberty followed, her doughy fingers gumming together in the rain. "If I were you, I'd go visit kinfolk somewhere else. And don't come back for a few weeks." As if she had family to visit. As if she had anyone at all, aside from her hired hands and her horse.

Her mouth went dry. "What do you know?"

"There's trouble brewing."

"We've been hearing that for months." But her pulse quickened at the intensity of his gaze. "You're crying wolf along with the rest of them."

He looked down at her for a moment, as if testing his reply in his mind before speaking. "Don't you remember? In the end, the wolf actually came."

"It will take more than a wolf to scare me off my farm."

The mysterious stranger shook his head and sighed. "Good day to you. Be well." He held her in his gaze for a heartbeat before tipping his hat and fading back into the rain.

Liberty's heart thundered as she entered the farmhouse, still dripping with rain. *It could have been worse.* She told herself. *It could have been a raiding party.*

But it wasn't. It was just a man passing through. Now if only his words weren't still echoing in her mind.

As she passed her bedroom on the way to the great hall, she caught a glimpse of herself in the looking glass on her bureau, and paused to weave an errant curl back into her braid.

She walked closer to the mirror. At a mere five feet two inches short, if it wasn't for the gentle curve of her waist and the way her corset filled out her bodice, she could pass for a tall child. She ventured a smile, and dimples popped into her cheeks. No one would guess she was old enough to be married, let alone widowed. But her sapphire blue eyes were shadowed by the valley of death the war had carved into her life.

When do you plan to come on back to the land of the living?

The question was, when would her conscience allow it?

She picked up a framed daguerreotype of Levi in his new uniform and studied it. She was sure he had been told not to smile while they captured his image, but he couldn't help it. He was so happy to fight for the Union, even though it meant taking a break from his studies at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg to do it. *I want to fight while I have the chance,* he had told her. *The war will be over before you know it, Libbie, and I have to do my part.* They married first, right after she had come out of mourning for Aunt Helen. It had seemed like perfect timing, and a dream come true for the orphan girl. A family of her own. A new beginning.

But I barely knew him. She was seventeen when they married, a mere child. They knew nothing, absolutely nothing. They believed he would be fine, would come back and finish his schooling and take over the Holloway Farm, and they'd have the rest of their lives to discover exactly what it was they loved about each other. The thought of his possible death was only fleeting. The idea that he may be wounded—

wounded beyond recognition and yet still alive—never occurred to either one of them. Her mind reeled back to the day she learned the news.

She had not responded well.

Struggling to bridle her memories so they would not run away with her again, Libbie sat on the edge of her bed and absentmindedly traced with her finger the pattern of the colorful patchwork quilt that covered it. Her first. She smiled wistfully as the last two years flashed through her mind. When other girls her age were having fun together and being courted by their beaux, Liberty Holloway was home, forced into the social isolation of widowhood, learning to quilt and preserve the harvest she grew with her hired hand.

Not that it was that different from before . . . As an orphan living with a spinster in a community of large families, Libbie had always been an oddity, a curiosity, but never really a friend. Levi's death had merely changed the reason for her solitude. She went from being Libbie the Orphan to Libbie the Widowed Bride.

But that was two years ago. *There's so much more to life than death.* Levi would have agreed. He had told her, in his one passing moment of gravity, that if he died, he would be happy knowing he had died in the service of his country. That he wanted her to find a way to be happy, too.

Maybe it was time, at long last, to try.

Kneeling on the rag rug at the end of her bed, Libbie pried up a loose floorboard, dug out the key she placed there nearly two years ago, and unlocked the cedar chest in front of her. The smell of a sunbaked forest greeted her as she lifted the lid, and she inhaled deeply. Slowly at first, and then like a child on Christmas morning, she lifted out dress after dress that she hadn't seen since those first bewildering months of the war. They were simple, practical, made by her own hand. But they weren't black, and some of them were even pretty.

Liberty's eyes misted over, and suddenly, she couldn't get her black crepe off fast enough. After unfastening the fabric-covered buttons she could reach, she cast her mourning into a rusty black puddle on the floor and stepped into the blue muslin, perfect for a summer day.

“What are you doing?”

Libbie jumped at the sound of Bella’s voice from the hallway. Nervous laughter trickled from her lips at the sight of her standing there with two horses in tow, smelling of damp earth and hay. “I’m so sorry to keep you waiting. I was on my way to get you. The danger has passed, we’re alone again.”

Bella’s velvety brown eyes widened as she looked at the discarded mourning dress and back to Liberty. “Those mourning clothes were your protection, Miss Liberty. No man, no matter how roguish, would try to take advantage of a woman in mourning.”

Liberty set her lips in a thin line. For hired help, Bella certainly could be outspoken. “Am I not free to make my own decision?” She shook the ring off her finger and into the jewelry box on her bureau. “It’s been long enough. Now fasten me up, please.”

Bella’s brow creased, but she obeyed. “I don’t think your mama would approve.” It was barely a whisper.

Libbie caught Bella’s eye in the looking glass, and with uncharacteristic sharpness, said, “My mother? You know she’s not around. She never was.”

Guilt trickled over Silas Ford as he rode east on Hagerstown Road, away from the Holloway farm. He hated what he had become. And there was no place like Gettysburg to remind him of just how far he had fallen.

The Lutheran Theological Seminary loomed ahead on Seminary Ridge, its cupola white against the pewter grey sky. Silas thought he’d never see it again—not after what happened before his final year as a student there. Yet here he was, near enough to see that the brick building remained unchanged, while he was so far from being the pastor the seminary had trained him to be that the contrast nearly choked him. *Hope deferred maketh the heart sick.*

But regret accomplished nothing. Silas swallowed the lump in his

throat and clucked his tongue, urging Bullet up the hill. It was an odd name for a horse whose owner refused to carry a gun. Named before it had come into Silas's possession, Silas had tried to change it, but the horse only responded to "Bullet." As a Lutheran, Silas wasn't supposed to believe in penance, but that's what it felt like. Not that he needed such an ever-present reminder of the sin that had changed more than just his life.

Mud sucked at Bullet's hooves as he carried Silas over the ridge and down the other side, toward town. With Holloway Farm out of sight behind Seminary Ridge, Silas breathed easier.

At least Liberty hadn't recognized him. He almost gave himself away back there, calling her by name like that. It was pure luck that he remembered the wooden sign by the road, the U.S. flag unfurling behind the lettering. If he hadn't known better, he would have thought "Liberty" was some reference to a Northern ideal, and not the name of a girl.

"Woman," he muttered, correcting himself. She was not the girl of fourteen summers he remembered, wilting beneath the scrutiny of the spinster who had hired him to repair her fences. No, Liberty had grown into a woman.

"And I've grown into an old man." The soft body of a student had been chiseled into muscular leanness. The fair skin and butter-blond hair he'd brought with him to seminary were now darker. The last time he'd seen a looking glass, he'd seen grey hair sprouting at his temples, and lines framing his eyes, though he was only twenty-eight. It should not have surprised him, not after what he'd seen. He doubted that anyone in Gettysburg would recognize him. It would be far easier if they didn't.

Thoughts of Silas's past scattered as he entered Gettysburg, carefully riding slow enough to appear casual, but fast enough that he did not look aimless. He had a purpose, indeed. He was oath-bound. The fact that it had been against his will had no bearing on his situation now.

"Whoa, Bullet." Though this stop was not part of his assignment,

Silas drew rein and dismounted in front of Christ Lutheran Church on Chambersburg Street. Removing his hat out of habit, he relished the gentle shower streaming over his body. Oh, how he wanted to be clean.

After tying Bullet to the hitching post in the street, he climbed the stone stairs, passed through the white columns under the portico, and slipped inside the arched door.

And waited. And hoped. Maybe here, in this church, he would feel closer to God than he did in his saddle. Silas did not bother to sit down, knowing his rain-soaked trousers would dampen the oak pews. And if God could meet him on a bench, He could just as well meet him standing in the back. He had met him here before. This was where Silas had worshiped alongside his fellow seminary students. That pew—fourth from the front on the left side—that was where he sat when Rev. Samuel Schmucker had fanned into flame the fire that had been kindling in his belly for the freedom of all men, regardless of color. When Schmucker's wife brought slaves into their marriage years ago, he taught and trained them to live as free men and women, then freed them. The reverend was the seminary founder, Silas's professor, and his role model. *What must he think of me now?* Silas shuddered. With any luck, he'd forgotten him all together.

Rolling the brim of his hat in his hands, he surveyed the narrow stained-glass windows. If the sun were shining, mosaics of vibrant color would depict inspiring stories from the Bible.

But the sun was not shining. So he closed his eyes, listening for God to speak to him anyway, and heard—nothing. Felt nothing. He sighed. *If I were God, would I want to talk to Silas Ford?* His mama had called times like these dry spells. “But the important thing,” she had said, “is to keep talking to God anyway, even if He isn't talking back.”

Forgive me, Silas prayed. *Show me the way out.* And he left the church feeling as much like a hypocrite as he ever had.

Chambersburg Street was springing to life as he reached Bullet and untied him, with women and children and a handful of men all headed toward the center of town.

“Excuse me,” he called down to a young lady carrying a tray of bread down the sidewalk. “Is there a parade somewhere?”

The girl beamed up at him. “Better,” she chirped. “Our soldiers are back!”

He raised his eyebrows. “Did they take a holiday? You must forgive me, I’m not from around here.”

“I know.” She laughed. “I’m sure I’d remember you if I’d seen you before.” She flashed a smile that made his skin creep, but he waited for more information. Girls were always ready to talk. “Last week, after President Lincoln called for a hundred thousand more volunteers to defend us from the Rebels, Governor Curtin issued a call asking for fifty thousand of those men to come from Pennsylvania.”

Silas swallowed his surprise. Fifty thousand? One hundred thousand? Did they have that many men to spare?

“So about sixty—or was it seventy?—of our boys from the college and seminary here signed up and went to Harrisburg. They are part of Company A, of the 26th Pennsylvania Emergency Infantry regiment. And now the 26th has just arrived by train!”

“Is that so?” Silas’s gaze followed the people now streaming past them into the square. College and seminary recruits? They’d be as green as the apples he’d eaten yesterday, and softer, too.

“Yes indeed!” The woman’s chipper voice grated on him. “They were supposed to arrive last night, but their train hit a cow on the track and it derailed them.” She giggled. “Let’s not bring that up to them. I’m just glad they’re here to protect us now.”

“Protect you from . . .”

“My goodness, you really are not from anywhere around here, are you? Haven’t you heard? The Rebel army is around here somewhere! They’ll be on to Washington next, if we don’t stop them!”

“We?”

“They.” She laughed brightly. “I meant ‘they.’ Women have no part in war. Come on, we’ll miss them!”

Soon Chambersburg Street opened into the town square, or The

Diamond, as locals called it, and the girl ran off to join some friends. A young boy tugged on his stirrup and offered to sell him a plug of tobacco.

“No thanks, can’t stand the stuff.” Silas smiled at the puzzled expression on the boy’s face before the child shrugged and tried for another customer.

Silas remained on the edge and watched smooth-faced boys in blue peacock about. *So you traded your textbooks and Bibles for rifles, did you?* His stomach soured for them, for their mothers and sweethearts. The beat of a drum hammered in Silas’s chest as the high-pitched fife played Yankee Doodle to a backdrop of feminine cheers. Even the dripping, sullen sky seemed unable to dampen the throng now filling The Diamond.

How pitiful. How pathetic. They would not cheer if they knew what he knew. They would not believe him if he told them.

Their march ended, the uniformed students milled about the crowd, accepting pies and coffee from grateful townsfolk.

“You a seminary student?” Silas called down to a soldier near him. With cheeks bulging with cherries, the boy nodded in the affirmative. “Is Rev. Schmucker still teaching? He was my professor once upon a time.”

The student-soldier’s eyes brightened. “You don’t say! When did you graduate?”

Silas rubbed a hand over his stubbled jaw. “Let’s see—I was there in ’57 and ’58.”

“Why then, you must have known Silas Ford!”

“As a matter of fact—” He stopped himself. “Why do you say that?”

“Oh every student from ’57 on knows him. For pity’s sake, the whole town knows about him. He’s a legend! You know—‘Silas Ford, man of the Lord?’”

Silas was stunned. “Man of the Lord?” He dared to believe it was true of him once, but—

“Of course! ‘Silas Ford, man of the Lord, took slaves to bed and shot Pa dead!’ Remember him now? Did you have any idea he was a bad egg?”

His blood turned to ice in his veins. “No, no, you must be mistaken.”

The boy shook his head. “Hardly. Watch this. Hey Blevens!” he shouted to another soldier. “Finish this rhyme: Silas Ford, man of the Lord . . .”

“Took slaves to bed and shot Pa dead!” Blevens hadn’t missed a beat.

Silas was going to be sick.

“You see?” The boy took another bite of cherry pie. “I can’t understand how you don’t know about him. Silas Ford is a cautionary tale. His mother wrote a letter to Rev. Schmucker explaining why he wasn’t coming back, and word got out quick. Just goes to show no matter how close we feel to God, we can all fall away as he did . . .” Another bite of pie.

Silas had heard enough. Clucking his tongue to Bullet, he began threading his way out of The Diamond.

Then he saw Liberty on the other side of the square, a simple blue dress gracing her frame as she climbed down from her buggy and joined the crowd. So she decided to put off mourning after all. *Does she know the rhyme too? Does she believe it?* Silas was glad she didn’t see him. He wanted to watch her, unnoticed. She hadn’t recognized him this morning, but what if she had a sudden recollection? Still, he couldn’t help but watch Liberty one more moment as the old protective instinct for the orphan girl swelled in his chest.

Then he remembered why he was here in the first place, and the smile faded. Protecting the innocent was not part of his line of work. And it was certainly not what he was known for in Gettysburg.

Heroines Behind the Lines

CIVIL WAR
BOOK 3

**YANKEE *in*
ATLANTA**

JOCELYN GREEN

MOODY PUBLISHERS
CHICAGO



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Chapter One

Atlanta, Georgia
Sunday, July 5, 1863

*T*raitor.

A rifle butt slammed between Caitlin's shoulder blades, pitching her forward on the narrow plank. Stumbling, she righted herself again, wrists bound behind her. A dangling rope brushed her face.

How could you?

She squinted up at the voice, edged with hatred yet still familiar. *Jack?* Blood streamed from his chest.

His hazel eyes blazed. *You did this to me.*

No!

If you do not stand with me, you stand against me.

The noose was around her neck now, burning like live coals. *It is only distance that separates us!*

He shook his head, his hair curling over one eye. *It is everything that separates us. The chasm can never be crossed.*

Caitlin looked past Jack to the shallow grave behind him. The seven bodies of the Andrews raiders lay decomposing into one brittle mass. But there was room for one more. Terror pulsed in her ears.

I had no choice!

You made your choice. To be one of them.

I am one of you!

You are neither.

A single kick to the scaffold beneath her feet, and—

“Jack!” With a scream in her throat and fists clenching her collar, Caitlin burst from her nightmare into the hot breath of Atlanta. *Surviving in enemy country is not a betrayal!* She railed against her recurring dream. *I am not a turncoat!*

A knock on the door. “Caitlin? It’s me, Minnie.” She knocked again. “I haven’t got my key.” Caitlin sat up and rolled her neck. The residual fear of her nightmare dissolved under her roommate’s muffled drawl. “You didn’t fall asleep on your books again, did you, honey?”

At nineteen years of age, Minerva Taylor was four years younger than Caitlin, and she called everyone honey, whether she was truly fond of them or not. As the Atlanta Female Institute’s music teacher whose pupils ranged from the talented to the uncooperative, it was a capacity that proved to be as diplomatic as it was habitual.

Caitlin tripped on a dog-eared book as she went to open her door. “What else is a Sunday afternoon for if not reading and napping?”

Minnie shook her head of perfectly coifed sunshine-blond hair, her face radiant in spite of the pockmark scarring. Parasol in hand, she stepped into the room and shut the door behind her, muting the rowdy conversations of the other boarders at Periwinkle Place. “Reading for pleasure I could understand. But something tells me you’re preparing for your classes. On a Sunday!” She plucked the worn volume from the floor. “Why, we’re almost out for the summer! You’re such a bluestocking!”

Caitlin’s grin faltered. Her classes were the best thing about Atlanta. When they ended for summer break, she would sincerely miss teaching.

Perhaps the Southern sun had addled her brain for her to not hate living here the way she once did. Atlanta had given Caitlin what New York City could not. A way to survive without marrying. Or soldiering.

She pasted a smile back into place. “And who’s to say I don’t find pleasure in *Paradise Lost*?”

“You would.” Minnie laughed, her grey eyes dancing. “But tell the truth. It’s in your curriculum too, isn’t it?”

“What kind of a literature instructor would I be if it weren’t?” The fact that Caitlin was a literature instructor at all was no small miracle. But the Atlanta Female Institute was only three years old and, with the war calling the men away, in dire need of teachers. Caitlin had been offered the position vacated by an enlisting soldier as a personal favor from the principal to Dr. Periwinkle. That they believed her to be a Confederate veteran had worked to her benefit, as well.

“What about you?” Caitlin asked, twisting her shoulder-length, cinnamon-colored hair back into place beneath her pins. “Don’t you play the piano and sing when you’re not in class?”

“Of course I do. But this?” She read the text with a hint of vibrato: “‘Live while ye may, Yet happy pair; enjoy till I return, Short pleasures; for long woes are to succeed . . . ’ That’s just morbid, honey!”

“What’s morbid is how you completely murdered the iambic pentameter!”

Minnie shrugged. “I’ve got to let you be better than me in *something*. Aside from shooting a gun, that is.” Her dimples deepened in rosy cheeks, as they always did when she teased.

“Let’s leave the past where it lies. I’ve certainly won few friends with mine.”

“I know you don’t like to talk about your soldiering in the army, but the truth is, I only wish I were as brave as you so I could lick some Yankees myself!”

But Caitlin had not felt brave in battle. Not with lead tearing toward her and cannons shaking the earth beneath her. Not with men unraveling around her like rag dolls in the mouth of an unseen beast. Not

with her lifeblood seeping out of her. She'd been terrified then, and the recollections jangled her still. "Never wish for a fight, Minnie. It is a horrid thing."

"But for a just and righteous cause such as ours—"

"For any cause."

Minnie laid a hand on her arm. "I've upset you. I'm sorry, honey." Her gaze traveled to the white line on Caitlin's jaw, likely assuming it was a mark from the war, and Caitlin did not correct her. "Come, let's go for a stroll."

By the time they stepped out onto Alabama Street, Caitlin's heart rate had almost returned to its normal pace. Apple peels and peanut shells crunched beneath every step along the busy dirt road where soldiers swarmed between local residents and travelers.

When two Rebels half-bowed in their direction, Minnie trilled the chorus of the ever-popular Bonnie Blue Flag. "Hurrah! Hurrah! For Southern rights, hurrah! Hurrah for the Bonnie Blue Flag that bears a single star."

Caitlin smiled at her friend's beautiful soprano voice, but could not stop the Battle Cry of Freedom from running through her own mind at the same time.

*The Union forever! Hurrah, boys, hurrah!
Down with the traitors, up with the stars;
While we rally round the flag, boys, rally once again,
Shouting the battle cry of freedom!*

"That one's looking at you," Minnie whispered.

Caitlin kept her gaze straight ahead. "Not likely. Or necessary."

"Don't you want to find a beau?"

"No."

"Why ever not? With your education, you could secure quite a husband."

“With my education, I don’t need a husband.” She arched an eyebrow. “I can make my own way.”

Minnie’s jaw dropped. “You don’t mean you’d rather have ‘single blessedness’ instead.”

“I most certainly do.”

Their conversation stalled at the corner of Whitehall Street and the railroad tracks. Knots of women and old men huddled in silent groups outside Wittgenstein’s saloon.

“What is it?” Minnie asked a woman nearby.

“There is news.” She nodded to the second floor of the building, the *Atlanta Daily Intelligencer* office. “If we can but survive the waiting for it.”

Minnie blanched and gripped Caitlin’s hand. “Father.” *Jack*. “Pray, stay with me until we hear.”

Hours passed, and the sun glared haughtily down upon them, baking all those who waited, exposed, below it. Sweat pricked Caitlin’s scalp beneath her palmetto hat and bloomed beneath her arms.

Prudence Periwinkle stood on the fringe of one cluster, clutching a bottle of smelling salts the way young mothers press babies to their chests. Horses swished their tails and pawed at the red dirt road, and the people choked on dust and suspense and fear.

No one spoke.

All eyes were on the arched door leading up to the *Atlanta Daily Intelligencer* office, waiting. News from the West reported that Vicksburg had surrendered. The Confederacy lay cut in two. But every breath still hinged on the news that would come from a little town in the North called Gettysburg.

Minnie’s whispered prayers were for her father, while Caitlin’s only thought was of Jack.

“There it is!” someone cried.

In the shadow of the door’s alcove, someone reached out and fed a ream of papers to hungry hands. Finally, the casualty list had arrived.

The sheets of names passed through the crowd, sending up wails and moans from nearly all who touched them. When it was Minnie’s

turn to read them, her hands shook so fiercely she thrust the pages into Caitlin's hand.

"Please," she whispered, eyes squeezed shut. "Thomas Taylor. Quickly, quickly, I can't bear another moment."

Caitlin scanned the tiny columns of names, the fresh ink now blurred and smudged. Hastily, she skipped to the *T*s.

And found the name.

"He is . . ."

Minnie's eyes popped open, and Caitlin labored to force out the words. "He was . . ." She shook her head. "He is at peace."

For a moment, Minnie sat in silence, as if frozen by the incomprehensible news. Then her face crumbled, yet she did not make a sound. Caitlin wrapped her arms around Minnie, and the grief of a father's daughter bled out onto her shoulder. Caitlin's face was wet with empathy.

Around them, sorrow thickened in the air, souring every breath. Caitlin tasted no victory in their despair.

In the edge of her vision, she saw a woman drop to her knees in the dusty road. Heart hammering on her ribs, Caitlin looked once more at the casualty list, slowing when she found the *Ps*.

Pelton, Pemberly, Pendleton, Periwinkle . . . Blood rushed in Caitlin's ears. *Periwinkle, Stuart*. Dr. Periwinkle's son. Prudence's precious nephew, the one she helped raise and love as a mother would have done. Gone. Prudence bowed down on the street, clawing fistfuls of dirt and letting them crumble over her silver hair.

The war would not come to Atlanta, they said. But from the fields of Pennsylvania, its long fingers wrapped around its throat with an iron grip. The sons of the city had been slain. They had even been defeated.

The fissures in the House of Dixie were running deeper, yawning wider. How long would it be before it came crashing down, as the crack in Edgar Allen Poe's "House of Usher" had sent it rushing into the sea?

And if I am here when the Confederacy collapses, will I be saved by the North? Or will I go down with the South?

Words from her nightmare reverberated in her spirit. *You are neither.*

Caught between two nations desperately at war, Caitlin McKae was on her own.

New York City
Sunday, July 5, 1863

“Jesus loves me—this I know, For the Bible tells me so.” Ruby O’Flannery rocked her one-year-old son and relished his warm weight on her lap. “Little ones to Him belong—They are weak, but He is strong.” She hummed the refrain and mused what a difference the truth of the song had made in her life, and in his. Before he was born, she had not wanted him, for reasons too painful to dwell upon. Now however, she could not imagine life without him. He had brought joy back into her life and laughter to her lips.

Aiden’s eyes drifted closed, and his dimpled hands loosened their grip on the zebras from his wooden Noah’s Ark set. Pressing a kiss to his pillowy cheek, Ruby laid him in his crib and gently brushed copper curls off his forehead.

“Sleep well, darlin’” she whispered.

Ruby tiptoed out of the room and descended the wide walnut staircase of the Waverly brownstone just as a knock sounded on the front door. Caroline Waverly, her employer, was reading in the rear parlor, but no matter. This caller was for Ruby—the only caller she ever had.

She opened the door, a smile already on her lips, to see Edward Goodrich still in his Sunday best. He was not devilishly handsome—she wouldn’t trust him if he was, given her previous experience with that sort. But he was genuine. Kind. His coffee-colored eyes were deep and warm, not mischievous—and certainly not lustful, thank heaven.

“Is he down?” Edward looked past her to the stairway.

“You just missed him. You know, sometimes I wonder if you come here for our Bible studies or to play with my wee babe.” Tilting her head in mock disapproval, her smile didn’t fade. “Come in, come in.”

Edward hung his hat on the hall stand, swiped a hand over his caramel-colored hair, and followed Ruby. She stopped in the kitchen to pour two glasses of lemonade before they went to the garden for their Sunday discussion. Ever since she had come to work for Caroline last year as the maid, she could not get enough of this beautiful space. Growing up as the daughter of a potato farmer in Ireland and as an immigrant living in New York City tenements for years, nature's beauty simply had not been part of her life, until now.

Shaded by a maple leaf canopy, Ruby and Edward sat at a wrought iron table flanked by hydrangea bushes drooping with white blooms. The rest of the garden was splattered with vibrant hues: yellow primroses, pink and red roses, and, hugging the tree trunks, green-and-white-leaved hostas.

"Thank goodness for the shade," Edward said as he shrugged his shoulders out of his tan broadcloth suit jacket and tugged at the cravat at his throat. Not a single breeze stirred the air. "Still, it beats the heat of Washington, doesn't it?"

"Aye." She sipped her lemonade, the glass already sweating in her hand. Ruby had first met Edward in Washington City the first year of the war. He was a hospital chaplain there, and she was there to be close to her husband in the Sixty-Ninth New York regiment. She had lodged with Sanitary Commission nurse Charlotte Waverly, her employer's daughter, and Charlotte's sister Alice. Now Charlotte was co-director of a Rhode Island military hospital, and Edward . . . Ruby sighed as she looked at his lean, care-worn face. Edward's plans had been altered by news of his father's accident at the shipyard. He had stepped into a coil of rope, which tangled around his legs when the pulley yanked up. Not only did his legs break with the force, but when his body hit the block at the top, his arms, which had been raised to cover his head, broke too. Edward requested a transfer to New York so he could care for him at his home only a few blocks from the Waverly residence. Lucky for Ruby, he also helped her understand the Bible during Aiden's Sunday afternoon naps. Ruby's faith was about as old as her toddling son, and

though eager, it was not always sure-footed. She was grateful for Edward's guidance.

Edward laid his black leather Bible on the table and leaned back, stretching his long arms behind his head. "So, Ruby. What shall we talk about today?" She had insisted long ago that he dispense with calling her Mrs. O'Flannery. After all, she was just an Irish immigrant, a servant. His family employed people like her.

"I read about a Samaritan in the gospel of Luke chapter twenty-one."

"Ah. One of my favorite parables." He leaned forward on his elbows. "What do you think it means?"

"Well, the lesson seems to be that we should help people in need. But I stumble over the 'thees' and 'thous.'" She'd been working on matching her Irish tongue more to American-English speech patterns like Mrs. Waverly's, but the poetic language of King James sometimes stumped her.

"It takes some getting used to. You've gleaned the main point, but let's dig a little deeper. The first two men who found a man stripped, robbed, and beaten on the road were Jewish religious men. They knew the right thing to do, but they didn't do it, because it wasn't convenient. The third man was a Samaritan. Do you know what that means?"

Ruby shook her head.

"Samaritans were despised by the Jews. But it was the Samaritan who loved his neighbor when the religious leaders chose not to. That should alarm us. See, we can be full of Bible knowledge, but if we don't love our neighbor, we still aren't pleasing Jesus."

"Who is our neighbor?"

Edward's smile broadened, and faint lines framed his eyes. "Anyone who God has brought into your life. Friends, family, Mrs. Waverly, but even those you meet at the market, or perhaps people you knew before you came to work here. Many times it isn't convenient to love your neighbor, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't."

Inwardly, Ruby shuddered. *I've spent this year trying to forget my*

past entirely. Am I really to go back and care for those in the tenements now?

The French doors opened and Caroline rustled out into the garden with Dickens, Charlotte's cat, beside her. "I do apologize for interrupting." She sat on a stone bench opposite Ruby and Edward, her olive-colored day dress billowing from her waist. "But I've made up my mind. I'm going."

Ruby's eyes widened. "To Gettysburg?"

Edward's eyebrows arched. "What's this?"

"The fighting at Gettysburg. If the papers can be believed, it was by far the worst battle of the war to date." Dickens jumped into her lap. "The need is desperate and the resources few. Charlotte asked me to join her; she says I can be of use just by stirring a cauldron of stew. For once, I said yes." She paused, stroking Dickens's marmalade fur.

Aiden's fussing floated out the open second-story window now, and Edward gathered the empty glasses from the table. "I'll get him, if it's all right with you."

It was. Edward's limp was barely perceptible as he ducked into the house.

Ruby turned back to Caroline. "What about her hospital in Rhode Island?"

"Olmsted insists he must have her field hospital experience on hand." Frederick Olmsted was the executive secretary of the Sanitary Commission. "Her co-director can manage without her for a time."

And I'll thank God I can stay right here. Where there was bloodshed, Charlotte was keen to go. But Ruby had seen enough of battlefields and army hospitals to suit her. She'd never forget the sea of wounded at White House Landing, Virginia, where she watched her own husband die right before her eyes just hours before Aiden was born.

Edward returned to the garden, carrying Aiden like a sack of flour and blowing kisses on his round belly. The baby giggled and squealed, squirming until his little feet stood on the soft grass. Stooping, Edward let Aiden grasp his fingers while he practiced walking.

“She’ll be in New York tomorrow, and from there we’ll travel on together and stay as long as they need us. Olmsted is already there by now. So is Dr. Lansing.”

Ruby nodded. At least Charlotte would catch a glimpse of her fiancé, then.

Edward sighed. “Where there are men—especially wounded men—there should be chaplains.”

“I’m sure there are, dear. And the Christian Commission has sent delegates, too.” Caroline patted his shoulder. “The spiritual welfare of the entire Army of the Potomac is not up to you. The patients in New York’s hospitals are lucky to have you here, and so is your father. And so are we.” She glanced at Ruby, then back at him. “Edward, will you look in on Ruby and the baby while we’re gone? Between Sundays, too? I’m letting the cook have some time off so she can visit her family. I’d feel so much better leaving if I knew I could count on you.”

“Of course you can.” Aiden sat on his foot as Edward straightened and grinned at Ruby. “That’s what neighbors are for.”

“Aye.” Ruby nodded and chuckled. “Whether it’s convenient or not.”

Heroines Behind the Lines

CIVIL WAR

Book 4

SPY *of*
RICHMOND

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Chapter One

Oakwood Cemetery, Richmond, Virginia
Thursday, September 24, 1863

Tell no one how it ended. Please,” Sophie murmured to Daphne, her gaze flicking over the precious few mourners receding from the graveside. A sticky breeze whispered through her black net veil as she bowed her head, praying she did not look as relieved as she felt to finally lay the past to rest. A thin ribbon of scar tissue itched beneath her wristband.

Questions swimming in their eyes, neighbors paid their respects to Sophie and took their leave until only the household staff and the family lawyer remained.

“My deepest condolences, Miss Kent.” Mr. Whittaker doffed his hat and smoothed his grey hair back from his brow. “You have sent word to your father, of course.”

She hadn’t. Part of her wanted to tell her father every detail, to make sure he knew how much his wife and daughter had both suffered.

She wanted to heap guilt upon him for joining the army and leaving home just when home became unbearable. It was easier to serve the Confederacy, she supposed, than to stay and serve what was left of his family.

“He receives mail at the prison camp?” Whittaker prodded.

“He does.” *He also gets cold, I imagine, and weak, and sick. He is forty-seven years old. What if I tell him about Mother and—it kills him?* Sophie balled her black-edged handkerchief in her hand. “Thank you for being here. If I might have a moment of your time, there is a matter I wish to discuss with you.”

“Regarding your mother’s property, I presume,” said Whittaker.

Sun flashed on spectacles as Otto Fischer, the Kents’ German immigrant steward, looked up. If the slaves had heard, however, none of them showed any sign of it.

“That’s right.”

“I have the documents with me.” His tone was hushed as he glanced at the fresh mound of earth. “Shall we?”

While Daphne waited, Mr. Whittaker and Sophie put a respectful distance between themselves and the grave.

“Now, the only ‘property’ Mother personally owned, was Daphne,” Sophie began. “When my father purchased her four years ago, she was to be my mother’s maid, and freed upon Mother’s death. My father said he’d secured this with you.” He had also stipulated that Daphne not be informed of the arrangement, lest she have motive to end Eleanor’s life herself.

“I remember.”

Sophie’s breath suspended while Whittaker slipped an envelope from inside his jacket. Then his frown sent dread trickling down her spine.

“Did Mr. Kent not inform you of the change?” He unsheathed the document. “The ownership of the property has been transferred.”

Sophie blinked, unable to process the word. “Transferred?”

“Bequeathed. To you.”

She gasped. "There must be some mistake. I don't own slaves."

"You do now, my dear."

No. No.

"You don't already have a maid, do you?" he continued. "It isn't fitting for a twenty-three-year-old woman to be without one. Besides, you know how folks would talk."

"No!" She reined in her voice. "No. I free her. I manumit her myself."

"I'm afraid that has not been left to your discretion. There is a codicil on the will. You may not sell or free her. She is to be yours for life. Daphne will be freed upon your death."

Or hers. Sophie's throat burned as she turned to look at Daphne. Though it was illegal for both of them, Sophie had taught her how to read and write for this day, so she'd be equipped for freedom. "She's thirty-six years old and has never lived according to her own wishes."

Mr. Whittaker held up his hand to stop her. "There is wisdom in this, Miss Kent. I know of your abolitionist leanings, and for your sake, I keep quiet about them." He sighed. "Couldn't be helped, I suppose, with your mother being from the North, and you going to school in Philadelphia. But you are no longer a child. It's time to leave childish thoughts behind you, and accept that this is the way things are. It is the way things *should* be."

She shook her head. But her lips refused to move.

"Accept this, my dear. It's what your parents wanted. Your father wrote you this letter to help explain. Again, my deepest regrets on your loss." His message delivered, he tipped his hat to her and left. By degrees, she absorbed the news, as her black mourning dress absorbed the sun.

Nearby, warping lids of unburied green pine coffins popped loose, cracking through the air like gunshots, exposing the dead from Chimborazo Hospital to the glaring light of day. Sophie pressed her handkerchief to her nose and returned to Daphne without the news she had longed to bring. Nothing had changed, after all. Daphne was

a slave before Eleanor Kent's death, and she was a slave still. *My slave.* Sophie's chest squeezed. *Are the sins of my father now mine?*

Alone in her bed chamber, Sophie's hands shook like linden leaves. Her father's words blurred on the page. *The Negro's happiest condition is that of bondage. Your mother and I could not punish Daphne with freedom.* Since when had Eleanor Kent believed that slaves should not be freed? It smacked of deception. Eleanor most likely had no idea her will had been changed.

The rest of the letter was a repeat of his farewell speech. He was sorry if his absence caused her pain, but after Lincoln announced his Emancipation Proclamation in September 1862, the war brazenly attacked slavery in a way it hadn't before. *But slavery is God-ordained, he'd said, and without it, the South cannot survive.* This was why he'd decided to fight. So that white Southerners could keep Negroes in bondage.

White Southerners like me. Her friends in Philadelphia would never believe it. *If Harrison could see me now . . .*

A sigh slipped from her. With Eleanor's body now removed from the house, Sophie withdrew the black crepe draping her mirror. The bright green eyes in the face that stared back at her were wiped of their former bright, inquisitive look. There was no sign in that reflection that its owner had once been the favorite child of her parents, and as protected from unpleasantness as any Southern girl could be. Those lips, which had been slow to speak but quick to smile, now lay flat. The face in the mirror was symmetrical but blank, vacant, so like her mother's at the end, it chilled her. *Make a difference,* her mother had told her years ago. *You'll find a way.*

Sophie thought she had. But her father had cut her writing career short, and now it was too late. To even hint at the opinions she had formerly published as John Thornton would be her ticket to Castle Thunder, the prison for political enemies, deserters, and citizens suspected

of treason. *I have no voice at all.* She had failed her mother, and she had failed herself.

Sweeping out onto her second-story balcony, Sophie watched a flock of geese recede into the blue-and-gold edged sky, then let her gaze drift down Church Hill. From her house at the corner of Twenty-seventh and Franklin Streets, the James River was a gilded, wrinkled ribbon. Though Confederate ship masts at Rocketts Landing and the Navy Yard bristled along the banks, Sophie's mind's eye saw the Delaware River instead, and the island within it teeming with men. Since the stunning Confederate defeat at Gettysburg, her father was one of them. Still he controlled her, even from inside a Federal prison camp.

As she gripped the balustrade, her mourning gown stark against the weathered white railings, Sophie mourned indeed. The war had killed her mother and taken her father. Nearly every family in her neighborhood had a husband, father, brother, or son in the army. The widow Madeline Blair, the only neighbor who had called on the Kents since the war started, had sent three of her four sons. Two of them had already been killed.

While Sophie had been ensconced in her home tending Eleanor, the war had turned her beloved, provincial Richmond into an overcrowded metropolis. The city was bursting with both living and dead, the way unburied corpses burst their coffins. Danger lapped at Richmond so often the tocsin in Capitol Square sounded with the regularity of a grandfather clock. The stakes could not be higher, and yet Sophie had barely even been a spectator, so entrenched had she been with Eleanor.

Marching footsteps grew louder, and Sophie turned toward the dipping sun. Dusty columns of soldiers—hundreds of them, maybe thousands—tramped toward her on Franklin Street. They wore blue. Prisoners from the dazzling Rebel victory at Chickamauga, no doubt. On either side of the street, windows opened, and women and children leaned out to watch. As the prisoners came closer, the jeers that followed them grew louder, too.

Well, you've come to Richmond at last, now where's your arms?

Oh, is these the kind of brutes that has come down here to kill our noble sons?

"Miss Sophie?" Daphne's rich voice drifted out to the balcony. "You hungry for supper? You need anything?"

Sophie beckoned her out on the porch with her. "I need these prisoners to be soldiers again." Her words tasted of treason. "And so do you."

Daphne cocked her eyebrow. "You sound just like your mama, God rest her."

Her throat burned. She wanted Daphne to be free, along with the rest of the Kent slaves. But, "My father says you're to be my maid-servant now."

She bowed. "I'm grateful to stay."

Sophie nodded, mustering her own gratitude that at least her father had not decided to sell Daphne outright. Still, "Do you ever imagine living your life for yourself?"

A short laugh popped from Daphne's lips. "Now what good could come of such a notion? It ain't fitting to dwell on what can't be."

"Look." Sophie pointed at the prisoners now snaking south and east. Some of them may have fought against her father. But they also fought against slavery. "Those men don't think it 'can't be.' If the North wins, you're free. Immediately and forever. If the South wins, slavery will go on just as it has for centuries."

Daphne's shoulders squared. "Well, then. Let the white men fight. Ain't nothing we can do about it."

But as Sophie watched the prisoners pack into the waterfront warehouse that was now Libby Prison, she wondered if Daphne was wrong.