

*Bonnets and Bugles Series · 1*

**DRUMMER  
BOY AT  
BULL RUN**

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**GILBERT MORRIS**

**MOODY PUBLISHERS**  
CHICAGO

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# 1

## Will You Hate Me If There's a War?

**P**ineville, Kentucky, was so close to the state line that the Virginia mountains were clearly visible. The quiet little town had few celebrations. Usually the Fourth of July was the most important. However, on one cool day in March 1861, the streets were filled with people, music, and the sound of laughter. Fifty years earlier the village had been incorporated, and this celebration had been ordained to call attention to that time.

The day was raw and windy, but no one seemed to mind—least of all the pretty girl who was tugging urgently at the sleeve of a boy close to the square dance platform.

“Come on, Jeff—we’re old enough!”

Leah Carter was barely thirteen, but she’d been yearning to square dance with the grown-ups for a long time. Her honey-colored hair gleamed as the pale sun touched it, and the green dress she wore matched the color of her eyes. It was her best dress. She’d been hoping that Jeff Majors would tell her how pretty it was—but he had not.

“Aw, I don’t know how.” Jeff was tall for fourteen years and had the blackest hair Leah had ever seen. He had black eyes too—and brows to match. He was wearing a pair of stiff new jeans, a red-and-brown checked shirt, and a pair of new brown

boots. Digging the toe of the right one into the dirt, he said stubbornly, "Anyway, your pa would paddle you if he caught you dancing."

"He would not!" Leah tossed her long hair. "He's never paddled me!"

Jeff suddenly grinned at her, his eyes crinkling until they were mere slits—they crinkled like his father's and brother's. "I can think of a time or two when he should have tanned you. Like the time you and Walter Beddows—"

"I don't want to hear about Walter Beddows!" Leah interrupted, her face turning pink. She hated Jeff's teasing. They'd grown up together, their families were the closest of friends, but for the last year she'd suddenly become aware of how handsome a boy Jeff was—though she'd never admit it. "Come on, I'll teach you."

Jeff tried to draw back, but she caught his arm and pulled him toward the low platform. The square dancers were moving to the music of a five-piece band, including two guitars, a banjo, a fiddle, and a dulcimer.

"I feel like a fool, Leah!" he protested. But somehow he found himself on the platform. He kept his eyes on his feet, trying to follow Leah's instructions. He knew he'd take a great deal of ribbing by his friends.

Right now he heard one of them calling, "Hey, Jeff! Where'd you get that pretty gal?"

"Don't pay any attention to that old Jay Walters!" Leah whispered. "You're doing fine!"

Two men arrived at the long refreshment table just then, and one squinted at the square dancers. He was six feet tall, and a fine black suit set off his trim figure. Nelson Majors had the same dark hair

and eyes as his son Jeff. "Will you look at that, Daniel!" he exclaimed.

Daniel Carter was a smaller man than his friend, no more than five feet ten inches. His light brown hair was growing thin on the crown, and his eyes were a faded blue. His mouth was firm under a scraggly mustache, but there was a fragile quality in his features. A look of surprise swept over his face. "Why—that's Leah and Jeff!"

Nelson Majors laughed at the expression on his friend's face. "They're growing up fast."

"Not fast enough to start square dancing with the grown-ups, I don't reckon." Carter scowled. Then, in spite of himself, a grin touched his lips. "That girl! She's stubborn as a blue-nosed mule!

I'll give her a thrashing when I get her home!"

"Be the first one, I reckon. Say, look at that." He grinned as his older son, Tom, approached the young couple. "He's going to tease the life out of Jeff for this stunt!"

Jeff, concentrating on his feet, jumped when a hand tapped his shoulder. He whirled around to find his brother standing there, a smile dancing in his dark eyes. "Cutting in on you, little brother," Tom announced cheerfully. He turned to Leah, adding, "I make it a habit to dance with every pretty girl."

Leah almost giggled, but decided that was not ladylike. Instead she let Tom Majors direct her around the floor. She caught a glimpse of Jeff stomping away—and then she did giggle. "He's mad at you."

"Do him good to be jealous." Tom smiled down at her. "I didn't think anybody on earth could make Jeff get up and dance in public. What'd you do, Leah—put a spell on him?"

“Oh, you just have to know how to handle Jeff.” Leah nodded wisely. “He’s shy, Mister Tom, but I know how to get him to do things.”

“I’ll bet you do!” A merry light gleamed in Tom Majors’s eyes. “You’ve been bossing him around since you were six years old. What I want to know is, how—”

He broke off suddenly, as a shout caught their ears. “It’s a fight!” he exclaimed. Releasing her, he dashed off the platform. Shouldering his way past a circle of men, Tom stared at the two young men who were pounding each other furiously.

The crowd was urging them on, but Tom instantly stepped between the two.

“Royal—Dave—!” He caught a wild blow on the cheek that drove his head back, but he yelled, “Stop this foolishness!”

Royal Carter’s face was contorted with anger. “Get out of the way, Tom! I’m going to stomp him!” Royal was not tall, but he was muscular and strong. Blond-haired and blue-eyed, he tried to look older by wearing a large mustache and heavy sideburns. He was Tom’s best friend.

“You ain’t stompin’ nobody, Carter!” Dave Mellon was much larger than his opponent but had taken several blows in the face. His lip was cut, and a large bruise was darkening on his cheek. His face was crimson with rage, and he tried to push Tom aside. “You taking up for him, Tom? You ought to know better!”

“What’s all this?” Now Mr. Carter had arrived at the inner circle, followed by Nelson Majors. He took his son’s arm. “Royal, you know better than to brawl in public!”

Ordinarily Royal Carter was a gentle young man—the last person one would expect to see in a fight. He was nineteen and had the nickname of “Professor” among his friends. Now he was pale with anger, and he glared at Mellon. “He cursed the president and the Union,” Royal said. “I won’t stand for that!”

“You and the rest of your Yankee friends will stand for more than that, Carter!” Dave Mellon was an outspoken abolitionist—which meant he was for freeing the slaves even if it meant war. President Lincoln would fight only to preserve the Union. “This country can’t put up with slavery!”

An angry mutter ran around the crowd.

Mr. Carter glanced around. Mellon’s words had divided the men into two groups. All were his neighbors, but they differed strongly on the matter of states’ rights—and slavery.

*It’s the same all over this country, he thought sadly. Men who’ve gotten along all their lives are ready to start shooting at each other!*

“Come along, Royal,” he said quietly. He turned, and his son—giving one hard glance at Dave Mellon—obeyed. They pushed their way through the crowd.

A man said loudly, “Why don’t you just go South, Carter?”

But Daniel Carter ignored him.

When the men reached the refreshment table, they found their wives waiting. “Are you all right, son?” Mary Carter was younger than her husband. She was a strong woman—which was very good, because Mr. Carter was not always well. “I thought you and Dave were good friends.”

“Not anymore,” Royal said sharply. “You should have heard what he said about us!”

“You’re going to hear worse, Royal.” Nelson Majors was very fond of young Carter. The young man had spent much time in his home over the years. Now worry disturbed Mr. Majors’s dark eyes. “This business about slavery and states’ rights isn’t going to get any better.”

“Do you think there’ll be a war, Nelson?” The question was asked by his wife, Irene, a frail woman who wore a worried expression. In her youth, she had been a great beauty, but sickness had drained her, and now she looked frightened.

“I hope not,” Mr. Majors said quickly. But his eyes met those of Daniel Carter—and he knew they were thinking the same thing.

“There’ll have to be a war,” Tom insisted. “The Yankees will force it on us.”

“Why, you don’t own any slaves, Tom,” Royal said.

“No, and I never will. But a state has the right to decide for itself what to do!”

That was the real issue that faced the country — whether or not a state could leave the Union if it so decided. And though the two families said no more, the celebration was spoiled for them.

They all seemed to realize that the lifelong friendship between the Carters and the Majors family was in peril. Indeed, the United States of America was on the verge of disaster.

\* \* \*

“Oh, Jeff, it’s the robin’s egg—the one we’ve looked for for so long!” Leah held the tiny blue egg



in her hand. Her face was alive with pleasure.

Leah and Jeff were high in a towering sycamore tree. They'd become expert tree climbers in their joint determination to collect a specimen of every bird's egg in the county. Leah was wearing her old overalls, and the two sat as easily on the limb as if it had been a solid bench.

"I was about to give up." Jeff stared down at the blue egg with satisfaction. "Well, now we can add this one—but we still don't have one from a woodpecker."

Leah began to count off the eggs they still needed to find. She had not gotten through the list, however, when the sound of horses approaching made her break off.

"Let's get down," she said hurriedly. "We'll look silly up in this old tree!"

"Too late," Jeff said. "They'll pass by us."

But the tree where they'd found the robin's nest was beside the road, and the road crossed a large brook at the same spot. Most riders paused there to water their horses, and this was exactly what happened.

"It's your brother!" Leah whispered in alarm.

"And that's your sister with him!" Jeff wanted to get away, but the buggy his brother drove came to a stop beneath their tree.

"We'll water the team," Tom said. "It's been a thirsty drive."

"Well, all right, but then you'll have to take me home, Tom."

Leah stared down through the foliage but could see only the top of the buggy. She could hear them, however, and she whispered, "We can't eavesdrop on them!"

“Cover your ears, then!” Jeff whispered back. “We can’t let them see us up here!” He wished he were up any other tree in the world.

“Sarah, you know I love you,” Tom said. “And I thought you cared for me.”

“Oh, Tom!” Sarah Carter was a beautiful girl. She had blonde hair, dark blue eyes, and a creamy complexion. Her simple blue dress set off her trim figure, and she was highly sought after by several young men. But her eyes were troubled as she said, “We can’t even talk about things like that.”

“Why not?” Tom demanded.

“Because things are so—so confused.” Sarah bit her lip. “There may be war next week. You know that, Tom.”

“Why, there’s always something for people to worry about. If people waited until there were no problems, nobody would ever get married!”

“This is different, Tom, and you know it.” Sarah went on, speaking softly but pointing out the difficulties. She ended by saying, “If war comes, you’d fight for the South, wouldn’t you, Tom?”

“I—I guess I’d have to, Sarah.”

“And my brother Royal would fight for the Union.” Worry crossed her smooth face, and she asked suddenly, “What would it be like if I married you—and you killed my brother—or if he killed you? Don’t you see how terrible that would be?”

Tom could only ask her to change her mind. Finally he said heavily, “I guess all we can do is hope there’s no war.”

Then he spoke to the horses, and the buggy pulled away.

Leah waited until she could not hear the sound

of the horses and wheels, then climbed down the tree.

Jeff slid to the ground too, keeping his eyes fixed on the buggy, which was turning past a distant grove of trees. "I wish we hadn't been up in that tree," he muttered.

"You knew he was courting her. Everybody knows that."

"Yeah, but I feel guilty about listening to them. That wasn't right!"

"I know. I feel the same way—but we couldn't help it." She put the tiny egg into a small box lined with cotton and closed the lid. The pleasure of the hunt was gone now, and she said, "I've got to get home."

"Me too."

They plodded along silently, each thinking of what they had heard. But when they came to the fork that led to the Carter place, Leah stopped abruptly and looked into his eyes. "Jeff—will you hate me if there's a war?"

"Why . . . that's a crazy thing to say!" Jeff blurted out. "Of course not!"

Leah studied his face for a moment, then whispered, "I'd never hate you, Jeff, no matter what!" There was a catch in her voice, and she whirled and dashed down the road.

Jeff watched her go. He almost ran after her. Then he thought of what Tom and Sarah had said. He whispered, "I'll never hate you, Leah—not ever!"

Then he resumed his slow walk toward his house. His shoulders were slumped, and his dark eyes were filled with doubt. A woodpecker drummed on a dead pine over his head, but young Jeff Majors was so troubled with thoughts of a war that he did not even glance up.

*Bonnets and Bugles Series · 2*

# **YANKEE BELLES IN DIXIE**

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# 1

## Leah's Plan

**L**eah—don't move!"

Leah Carter had stepped halfway over a rotten log in the woods, but at the sound of Jeff Majors's voice she froze where she was. At the same instant she heard a buzzing that made her blood seem to run cold. With her foot half over the log, she lowered her eyes to a diamond rattler thick as a man's wrist and poised to strike. Its needle-sharp fangs were white, and its rattles blurred as they sounded their dire warning.

"Don't move!" Jeff whispered again.

Leah longed to turn and run, but she knew that the striking snake would catch her in the leg if she tried that. She heard Jeff to her left and wanted to cry out to him to be careful.

She felt the sun beating down on her head as she stood rigid in position.

Suddenly Jeff sprang into her line of vision. He struck at the snake with a large stick, shouting, "Get back, Leah!"

Leah leaped backward and in her anxiety sprawled full length on her back. She scrambled to her feet and saw Jeff still thrashing at the snake with all his might. "Be careful, Jeff! Don't let him get you!"

Jeff straightened up and turned to her, his face pale, and said in a voice not quite steady, "I guess that'll take care of him!"

Now that the danger was over, Leah suddenly felt sick. Her knees were weak and trembling. When Jeff dangled the snake over the stick, she cried out, "No, I don't want to see him!" She walked unsteadily away and leaned against a tall hickory. Her shoulders began to shake, and she put her head against the rough bark trying to hold back the tears.

Jeff dropped the snake at once and came to stand beside her. "Aw, Leah," he said uncomfortably, "don't cry. It's all over now." When she did not move, he tentatively put a hand on her shoulder and turned her around. Looking down at her, he muttered, "That was pretty close, but we made it all right."

Jeff Majors had the blackest hair possible and eyes so dark he was called the Black Majors by some of the family. Tall for his age and looking older than his fourteen years, he had large hands and feet. There was a look of durability about him. He wore a pair of worn tan trousers and a faded checked shirt, both somewhat small for him.

Leah pulled herself together, swallowed hard, and looked up. "You saved my life, Jeff. He—he would have gotten me for sure!"

"Well, I'm glad you didn't step on him. They're bad business."

Leah was sobered by the experience. "I could have died," she whispered. "You never think about such things until something like this happens."

"Sure. I reckon it pays to be careful in the woods—but when you're stepping over a log you can't always see what's on the other side."

\* \* \*

Jeff looked down at Leah, thinking how pretty she had gotten in the last year. Today she wore a pair of faded blue overalls that had once belonged to her brother, Royal, but somehow she looked nice in them. One thing they had in common was their birthday—June fifteenth—but she was one year younger than he was. He admired her green eyes and blonde hair, now falling down her back, but to cover his embarrassment he said, “Well, you would’ve done the same for me.”

“I don’t know if I could have.” Leah turned, and the two walked slowly along the forest path.

When they reached an opening in the trees, they paused and looked down into the wide valley. “I sure got lonesome to see that house of yours when I was gone to the army,” Jeff murmured. He studied the Carter home, then lifted his eyes further. “Can’t see our place from here. I missed it too— thought of it every day.”

“Someday you’ll all come back,” Leah said softly. “The war will be over, and we’ll all be together again just like we used to be.”

The Civil War had shattered the little town of Pineville, just as it had other towns all over the country. Dan and Mary Carter, Leah’s parents, had stood for the Union, but Jeff’s father, Nelson Majors, had been Southern born. He had taken his wife and two sons South, settling in Richmond. Jeff’s mother died soon after their arrival, bringing a new child, named Esther, into the world.

Looking down, Jeff thought of how it had been when they were growing up together.

Leah asked suddenly, “Do you have to go back and be a drummer boy, Jeff? Can’t you just stay here until the war is over?”



“Why, I can’t do that! I’ve got to be with my pa and Tom.”

“But—but your father’s in prison in Washington. He’s not in Richmond.”

Jeff’s lips made a thin line, and he nodded curtly. “He won’t be there for always. He’ll get exchanged or . . . or . . .” The thoughts that ran through his mind disturbed him. His father had been taken as a prisoner of war at the Battle of Bull Run, and since that time Jeff had thought of little else except how to free him. Leah seemed to see that he was troubled. “Well, in any case, we’ve got Esther here. We’ll take good care of her.”

The Carters had volunteered to take the baby since Nelson Majors was in the army and had no way to care for a child.

Abruptly she looked at him and said, “Jeff, you know what I heard one time?”

He looked down at her curiously. “You hear a lot. What is it this time?”

Leah pursed her lips and looked thoughtful. “I read somewhere that if someone saves your life, you belong to that person somehow.”

Jeff grinned. “Well, I guess you belong to me then. That means I get first helpings at the table tonight—and you have to wash all my clothes while I’m here.”

Leah was more serious. “You always get first helpings—but I’ll never forget how you jumped in there and killed that old rattler!”

“Oh, shucks, Leah, that was nothing.” Jeff shrugged. But he was pleased with the way she looked at him. “I’m glad that I was there. I wouldn’t want anything to happen to you. You’re my best friend, aren’t you?”

She smiled instantly, her teeth looking very white against her tanned face. "Yes, we'll always be best friends."

Jeff was shy in many ways. Although he and Leah had been best friends for a long time, he somehow felt embarrassed to talk about it. "Come on, let's go see old Napoleon."

They walked quickly down the path, emerging finally at a bridge that spanned a sparkling stream. Leaning on the rail they watched the small minnows sparkle in the sunlight. Occasionally a fish would break the water, and Jeff said wistfully, "I wish I had a line here. I'd catch some of those bass."

"I don't see old Napoleon though."

"He's a pretty smart fish, and I caught him once. So I don't think he's going to be dumb enough to get caught again."

Jeff remembered. They had been at this very bridge when word came that the North and the South were at war. That had been the beginning of hard times for them both.

"That was really something when you caught old Napoleon," Leah said quietly.

Old Napoleon was a huge bass, legendary almost, that had been able to avoid being caught for years. But Jeff had snagged the huge fish on his last visit and managed to get him to shore.

"You let him go, Jeff. I never did really know why you did that."

Jeff traced his initials on the wooden rail with his forefinger and was silent for a moment. Finally he said, "I guess I just like things to stay where they are. Everything's changing so quick. When I was in the battle at Bull Run, for some crazy reason I thought about Napoleon. We don't have a home

here anymore, but I thought, *Well, as long as old Napoleon's there, not everything will change.*"

He thought again to the time he had pulled the thumping fish in, how he'd stared at him, then bent over and loosed the hook and let him go free. "Some of these days," he whispered, "when the war is over, I'll come back, and we'll catch him again, Leah."

"I don't know—I don't think I could eat old Napoleon. That would just be like eating Delilah." Delilah was the hammer-headed tomcat that dominated the Carter household.

Both of them laughed at the idea of eating Delilah, then they turned toward the house. On the way they stopped to look at several bird nests. For years they had collected wild bird eggs until together they had the best collection in the county. Leah had taken it when Jeff moved with his family.

"Look, Jeff, there's that tree where we got the wren's egg. Do you remember that day?"

Jeff stared up at the branches and thought for a moment. "And that's the day my brother Tom and your sister Sarah parked under it in the buggy." He smiled. "I sure felt bad about eavesdropping on them."

Tom Majors had been courting Sarah Carter before the war began. They were very much in love. Jeff only too well remembered perching in the tree with Leah when their buggy pulled up. Tom demanded to know why Sarah would not marry him. She had said it was because Tom may soon be fighting for the South but her brother Royal would fight for the North. "What would it be like if I married you—and you killed my brother—or he killed you?"

Thinking of this, Jeff shook his head. "Things sure have gotten mixed up, haven't they?"

Tentatively, Leah touched his arm, drawing his eyes around to her. "One day it will be all right. The war will be over, and Tom and Sarah will get married. And Esther will grow up, and you and your father will come back and live in Kentucky again."

"You really believe that, Leah?"

"Yes!"

Jeff examined her face carefully. "I'm glad you do. Sometimes I doubt it—but I hope you always believe it, Leah."

When they got within a hundred yards of the house, Jeff suddenly halted and took her arm. "I'll be leaving here soon."

"Oh, *don't* go back to the war—you could get killed!" Leah pleaded, looking up at him with alarm in her eyes.

"Well, I'm not going back to the army right now."

"Where are you going then?"

Jeff pulled off his straw hat and ran his hand through his black hair. He bit his lip. "I'm going to Washington—to see my father."

"Why—you can't do that!" Leah exclaimed. "You're in the Confederate Army. You're a drummer boy—not carrying a gun—but I don't think that matters!" She shook her head so that her blonde hair swung over her back. "You can't do it, Jeff! You'll get caught, and they shoot spies!"

"I don't care—I've got to do it!"

She stood there arguing with him.

Finally, when he said, "I'm going, and that's all there is to it," and she said, "You are the most stubborn boy on the face of the earth!" Leah seemed to have a sudden thought.

“Well, you can’t go alone,” she announced. “You can go with me and Pa.” Jeff stared at her. “What do you mean?”

“Why, now that Pa’s a sutler, you know we follow the Union Army everywhere, selling them things. The army’s just outside Washington, and Pa said last night we’re leaving soon to take care of the soldiers.”

Dan Carter had decided that it was God’s will for him—even though he was not in good health—to follow the Northern army and sell supplies to the soldiers. In addition to the usual tobacco and paper and thread, he carried Bibles and tracts, which he distributed to the lonesome soldiers of the Army of the Potomac.

Jeff shook his head stubbornly. “No, that wouldn’t be right. You both might get caught. Then we’d all three get shot.”

“We won’t get caught.”

Jeff knew she was almost as stubborn as he was.

For a time she seemed to be thinking hard. Finally her eyes began to sparkle. “You can be our helper,” she cried. “You don’t look like a Southern spy. Just wear those old clothes you’ve got on, keep your mouth shut, and nobody will ever know but what you’re just a helper.”

They talked excitedly, and by the time they got back to the house and went to find her father, Leah had already thought of a plan. She explained it carefully to her father.

Daniel Carter was a thin man with a rather sickly look and faded blue eyes. He listened, his eyes on the two of them, his mouth firm under a scraggly mustache. He had been badly wounded in the Mexican War and could not join the army now, but

he wanted to serve his country. When Leah was finished, he nodded slowly. "Well, I think that may be the thing to do." He cut off Jeff's protest by saying, "You don't know this young lady like I do, Jeff. When she gets her mind set on something, she's as stubborn as a blue-nosed mule!"

"Pa, don't say that!" Leah exclaimed. "I'm not a bit like a mule!"

"Well, you're a lot prettier than one." Her father smiled. "But I still say you're just about as stubborn." Then he turned back to Jeff. "We'd better do it that way, Jeff. I know you're worried about your pa. You can go with us, and we'll see if the Lord will help us get to see him."

Jeff swallowed hard. The kindness of this family was more than he ever bargained for. When they had agreed to take his newborn sister, Esther, for as long as necessary, he'd thought they were the finest people in the world. Now he knew so!

"Thanks, Mr. Carter. Me and Pa and Tom, we won't ever forget you for this!"

*Bonnets and Bugles Series · 3*

# THE SECRET OF RICHMOND MANOR

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# 1

## Who'd Eat an Old Frog?

Leah Carter bent over the wood cookstove and opened the oven door. A delicious aroma wafted out. She inhaled it with enjoyment, then pulled out the large pan and placed it on the table. Looking around, she found the broom in the corner and quickly removed one of the straws. Coming back to the table, she leaned over the cake that bulged over the pan and plunged the straw into the top.

“Just right!” she said with satisfaction. She placed the cake aside and then stepped back to the stove, where a saucepan of chocolate was bubbling. She stood watching it for awhile, and when it looked right she picked up the pan and went to the cake. Carefully she added the icing and then, putting the saucepan down, examined her creation. “You look like a fine cake,” she said.

“You talking to yourself, Leah?”

She jumped, startled, and turned to the man who had come in. “Uncle Silas,” she scolded, “I wish you wouldn’t sneak up on me like that!”

“I wasn’t sneaking.” Silas Carter grinned at her with an air of innocence. He was a small man with a full white beard and a pair of merry blue eyes. “I came clomping in like a herd of elephants.” A sly smirk touched his lips, and he said, “I think you must be thinking about some young man.”

“I was not!” Leah protested.

“Well, have it your own way.” Uncle Silas walked over to the table and looked down at the cake. “How ’bout I have a piece of that?”

“No, that’s for supper.”

“Well, let me just taste the icing.”

When her uncle reached out to draw his finger across the frosting, Leah squealed, “Don’t you dare!” Turning, she picked up the saucepan. “Here, you can scrape the pan.” She watched him greedily lick the spoon, then begin scraping at the thick icing on the inside. “You’re just like a child,” she exclaimed, shaking her head.

Silas did not stop eating the icing. “Well, I did without good cooking so long,” he said between bites, “I don’t miss many chances.”

“I hope you’ve got something to do today,” Leah said. “I can’t cook with you underfoot all the time.”

“I’ll just sit right over here.” Silas drew a cane-bottomed chair from under the table and moved it against the wall. Carefully he sat down and tilted it back, placing his heels on the rung. “Now this is what I like. Lots of good food and a fine-looking young woman to do the housework! I should have thought of this a long time ago.”

“You’re spoiled,” Leah accused the old man.

Silas nodded cheerfully. “About time, I say.” He gave the spoon another healthy swipe with his tongue. “If I had known I could’ve had a life like this, I would’ve gotten sick a long time ago.”

Silas’s two nieces, Leah and Sarah Carter, had come all the way to Virginia from Kentucky to care for him after he had gotten ill. They had, he insisted, saved his life from the awful woman he’d hired to take care of him. He had grown very fond of the girls and had been saddened when Sarah had to

return home. She had had a slight misunderstanding with the Confederate authorities. In fact, she'd been falsely accused of being a spy and had been forced to leave Richmond.

Looking over at Leah, Silas said, "I'm sure glad you could stay and take care of me. I miss Sarah, though. She sure is a fine girl!"

Leah was busy rattling pans, getting ready to cook the evening meal. "I miss her too. And Pa and Ma—and Esther."

"Too bad Sarah had to go home. I was sad to see it happen—but not as sorry as Tom."

He gave the spoon one more lick, then gruffly said, "I guess he's all she writes about in her letters." He handed the pan to Leah and said, "What time are the Majors boys coming?"

She began cleaning the saucepan. "They said they'd be here late this afternoon."

"I was surprised that they could get off, what with this battle shaping up," Uncle Silas said.

The mention of the battle caused Leah to frown. "I guess it's only because Lt. Majors is still weak from being in that ole Yankee prison camp. I still don't like the way he looks. He ought to take a month off."

"I don't think he's going to get it, though, the way the Yankees are headed this way. We'll need every man we can get to hold off them blue-bellies." Silas tilted his chair forward and stood to his feet. "What all we having for supper? I'm hungry already."

"You get out of here, Uncle Silas," Leah scolded. "I can't get a thing done with you around, and you're not going to spoil your supper by getting into that cake!"

Silas shook his head sadly. “That was exactly my intention,” he said. “But you’re the boss in the kitchen, so I’ll go out and hoe the beans a little bit.”

Leah, looking out the window, smiled as her uncle picked up a hoe and headed for the garden. As he began hoeing slowly and methodically, she thought again how strange it was that she was here in Richmond. She’d grown up in Kentucky, but when the war came that state had split in two—half for the Union and half for the South. The Carter family had been for the Union—her own brother, Royal, was serving in the Union army. The thought of Royal made her sad for a moment. She was afraid he was in the Army of the Potomac that everyone said was headed for Richmond.

She thought of the job of getting the chicken ready for supper. She didn’t like that part of cooking—killing the chicken. But it was something that had to be done.

She went out into the chicken yard where the white birds flocked to her, expecting to be fed. *I wish there was some way to eat chickens without killing them*, she thought. She loved animals, and it was hard to choose one, but she did. She quickly went through the ritual of killing the bird and picking the feathers off. When she came back into the house, she complained, “I should’ve waited and made Jeff do that.”

As she cut the chicken into parts and put them in a bowl, she thought about Jeff Majors. He and Tom were the two sons of Lt. Nelson Majors, and Leah had known them all her life. They had been neighbors back in Kentucky. Lt. Majors was from Virginia though, and after Fort Sumter was fired on

he'd taken his family South. Here he'd joined the Confederate army, as had his sons, Tom and Jeff.

As Leah thought of Jeff, her eyes brightened. "I wish he didn't have to go to that war. He's not really old enough—only fifteen." Jeff was a drummer boy in his father's company. She and Jeff had grown up together, were more like brother and sister, and he'd said he was glad she'd come to Richmond, for he had been lonesome for her.

Finally all the dinner preparations were completed. Just as she finished, Leah heard her uncle call out, "Here they come, Leah."

She whipped off her apron and ran out the door. She stopped on the porch as three men in a wagon waved and called to her.

Leah looked for Jeff, who sprang out of the wagon first. He was a tall boy with the blackest hair she'd ever seen. His eyes also were black. He was wearing a gray Confederate uniform with buttons down the front and looked very handsome, she thought. She wouldn't say so, however.

As he came up to her, she pouted. "I should have known you'd come in time for supper. You never miss a meal, do you?"

Jeff Majors grinned. "I'd be a fool if I did, with as good a cook as you are."

His dark eyes gleamed with humor, and he looked her over. She was wearing a light blue dress today with white trim around the neck and sleeves and had tied her long blonde hair with a single bow.

"Why, you look right pretty, Leah. It's always good when you have a pretty cook instead of an ugly one."

Leah flushed with pleasure, for Jeff didn't pay her many compliments. "You wouldn't care if an

*ape* cooked your food, Jeff Majors!” She turned then to greet his father and brother and thought, *I reckon Nelson Majors is one of the handsomest men in the world.*

Lt. Majors was indeed fine looking, over six feet tall, dark-skinned, having the same black hair that Jeff had. He had hazel eyes, however, that were very unusual. He bowed formally to Leah and said, “Miss Leah, I’m sorry for you—a troop of hungry soldiers here to be fed.”

Leah took the hand he held out and, when he kissed it, blushed. “All you officers talk fancy,” she said.

“So do we corporals.” Tom Majors, tall and dark like his father, came to shake Leah’s hand himself. He grinned at her. “I feel like I could eat a bear.”

“Well, we don’t have any bears,” she said. “But you sit out here on the porch and talk. Supper’ll be ready as soon as I call you.”

She went back inside and quickly put the chicken on to fry. As it did, she set the table, putting on Uncle Silas’s best white tablecloth. She placed a bowl of fresh flowers, including violets and daisies, in the middle of the table. By the time she’d done all that and mashed the potatoes, the chicken was almost done. She went to the door and called, “Come and get it while it’s hot.”

The four men came in, and Lt. Majors’s eyes opened wide as he looked at the table. “Why, this is like eating at a fancy hotel in Richmond, only better.”

Tom said almost reverently as he sniffed the air, “That doesn’t smell like anything we get to eat in camp. Come on, let’s lay our ears back and pitch into it!”

Jeff laughed. "You've got the manners of a wild hog, Tom."

Tom hit his younger brother on the shoulder. "My manners are as good as yours, I reckon, Brother."

The men sat down and spoke of how pretty the table was set.

When Leah had brought the heaping platter of fried chicken and set it down, she seated herself. "There! We can get started."

Silas bowed his head, and the others followed his example. "Father," he prayed, "we thank You for this food. We thank You for these guests, and we pray for our folks at home. We acknowledge that every good gift comes from You. We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen."

"Amen!" Lt. Majors said and looked around the loaded table. "Well, we're not going to be hungry if we get on the outside of this food." He looked at the golden fried chicken, the pork chops, the heaping bowl of mashed potatoes, a bowl of poke sallet, and other vegetables. Then he picked up a piece of fresh-baked bread and took a bite. "Oh, my!" He sighed. "I feel like I'm going to commit gluttony."

They all fell to, and Leah was pleased at the way everyone ate. She kept their glasses filled with sweet milk, except for Jeff, who liked buttermilk better. A constant stream of compliments came her way, and she was happy that she'd been able to satisfy them.

When they had slowed down and began shoving their plates back, Leah rose, saying, "You're not through yet."

"Not dessert! I didn't save any room," Jeff protested.

Leah smiled at him sweetly. "That's all right, Jeff. Your father and brother can eat your share."

She left and came back with the cake she had made earlier. When Jeff saw it, he cried out, "Not chocolate-iced cake!"

Leah put down the cake and said innocently, "Too bad you're so full you can't eat any."

"Oh, yeah? Well, you just watch!" He waited as patiently as he could while Leah sliced a piece for each of them.

Jeff started shoveling the dessert into his mouth, and his father said, "Son, you sound like a pig snorting and grunting. I'm ashamed of you."

"I'm sorry, Pa," Jeff said with his mouth stuffed full. "You know how I can resist anything except temptation and dessert."

While the men ate, Leah filled their cups with coffee. "This is about the last of the real coffee," she said. "You'd better enjoy it."

The room became relatively quiet as they ate their dessert. But finally Uncle Silas groaned and said, "Girl, you've done us all in!"

Leah laughed at him, and a dimple popped into her cheek. "It's not my fault you all eat like pigs. You didn't have to."

"Yes, we did, Leah," Tom disagreed. "Any man who wouldn't fill himself up on food like this, why, he's no man at all."

They sat around the table then, enjoying one another's company. Soon they began to talk about the war.

Silas asked, "Nelson, what's the talk around headquarters about this army McClelland's got?"

The lieutenant grew serious. He tapped on the white tablecloth with one forefinger and shook his



head. "We've got word that he's got over one hundred thousand men."

"How many do we have, Pa?" Jeff asked.

"Well, not that many—maybe seventy thousand in all."

"Well, one rebel could whip five Yankees," Tom said at once.

His father shook his head. "I've heard that said before. But from what I've seen, it's just not so. Those Union soldiers at Bull Run—they fought just about as hard as men could fight."

"But they ran away—we whipped them," Jeff said, chewing on another piece of cake.

Lt. Majors looked at his younger son. "You know, Jeff, in one way I'm sorry we won that battle."

"Sorry we *won*!" Jeff exclaimed. "How can you say that?"

"It's made us overconfident, I'm afraid. All you hear is how we put the run on the Yankees, but one battle's not the war."

Silas nodded. "I think you're right, Nelson. From what I hear, the Yankees went back, put their heads down, and started building a big army and lots of war factories. About all we've done around here is brag about how we whipped them in one battle."

Jeff seemed astounded. "Why, I don't see how you can talk like that! We've been training and drilling every day. We'll be ready for them."

"I don't doubt we'll do the best we can," his father said, "and after all, we're fighting for our homes, and they're intruders."

They talked for a while longer about the war, then changed the subject. With a battle coming up, they were all a little apprehensive and somewhat depressed. They talked about Esther, Nelson

Major's baby daughter. His wife had died giving birth to Esther, and it had been the Carters, back in Kentucky, who volunteered to take the girl until the Majors could do better.

"I got a letter from your mother," Lt. Majors said to Leah. He took it out of his pocket. "You might want to read it." He smiled saying, "She claims that Esther's even prettier than you were when you were a baby."

Leah smiled too and took the letter. "Well, she is. She's the prettiest baby I ever saw." As she read, she thought of what a tie Esther had made between the two families. They were divided by the war, but they were together in the task of raising Esther Majors. Handing the letter on to Uncle Silas to read, she said, "I wish I could see her. I miss her so much."

"So do I," the lieutenant said, a frown darkening his face. "A man wants to see his children, and this war won't permit that."

Leah rose and said, "I'll do the dishes."

"Well, I'll help," Tom said. "And you too, Jeff."

"I'm too full," Jeff protested.

But Tom reached down, grabbed him by the hair, and jerked him squealing to his feet.

"You'll help, or I'll strap you." But he laughed.

The young people cleaned up the supper dishes while Silas and Nelson Majors sat on the front porch. The three made a game out of it, laughing and having a good time. Finally they finished and walked out onto the porch too, where they sat until it grew dark.

"Guess we need to go inside. The skeeters are gonna be getting bad," Silas said.

But Jeff said suddenly, "Have you been listening to that big old frog croaking down at the creek?"

“Sounds like a bull, don’t he?” Silas nodded. “He’s a big one!”

“I’d like to go get me a mess of frogs,” Jeff said.

Silas said, “Well, there’s a frog gig in the shed over there. It’s kind of rusty, but I reckon it’ll do. If you want to go, take you a lantern and have at it.”

Jeff brightened.

Leah knew he liked any kind of hunting and fishing.

“Come on, Tom,” he said. “Let’s go.”

“Not me. I’m going to go inside and sit down and not do a thing. I’ve got a feeling we’re going to be pretty busy after we go back.”

Jeff looked at Leah. “Leah, you come. You can hold the lantern while I do the gigging.”

Leah made a face, wrinkling up her nose. “Who’d eat an old frog?”

“I would,” Jeff said. He cocked his head to one side and begged, “Come on, Leah. It’ll be fun.”

“Don’t do it, Leah,” Tom advised. “He’ll have you doing all the work. That’s the way Jeff is.”

Leah let Jeff coax for a little while, then said, “All right, but I’m going to put on my old clothes.” She went to her room and put on a pair of frayed overalls and old shoes.

When she went outside, Jeff was waiting, holding a lantern and a long pole and a sack. “Look! This ought to get ’em.” He showed her the gig, which looked like a small pitchfork with four prongs, each having a barb.

Then they walked down to the road, turned, and went on to the creek. The moon had begun to rise—a full moon, like a huge silver dish. By the light of it, Leah could see a small, flat-bottomed wooden boat.

"You get in front," Jeff said. "I'll do the paddling."

Leah scrambled into the boat, holding the lantern carefully.

Jeff got in after her, picked up the paddle, and began to row slowly downstream.

"It's sure quiet," Leah said.

At that moment a huge bull frog said, "*Harumph!*" and she nearly jumped out of the boat.

"Hold it! Hold that lantern up!" Jeff cried.

Leah held the light high, and Jeff brought the boat to a stop. "Let's sit still," he said quietly. He picked up the frog gig and laid down the paddle. "There," he said, "see there—there he is—look at the size of that frog!"

Leah peered into the night, but the lantern light almost blinded her. Finally she did manage to see two gleaming eyes and made out the shape of a large frog perched on the bank.

"Careful now—don't move," Jeff whispered. He picked up the paddle again, maneuvered the boat close to the bank, and grasped the frog gig. Then with a sudden lunge he speared the frog. "Got him!" he exclaimed. He pulled the frog in and removed him from the barbed prongs. As he dropped him into the sack, he said with satisfaction, "Kick all you want to, frog, but you'll be breakfast tomorrow!"

The frog thumped in the sack on the bottom of the boat, and Leah said again, "I don't want to eat any old frog!"

"Did you ever eat frog legs?"

"No, I never did. There's lots of things I haven't eaten."

“Why, you’d like them. They’re better than chicken.” Jeff nodded. “Come on, let’s move on down.”

For the next two hours, they paddled slowly down the small stream. Although Leah did not like gigging frogs, she did enjoy being out in the quiet of the night. The mosquitoes, for some reason, were not as bad as usual. They just sang a high, whining song around her ears occasionally. She took a few bites from them, but she was used to that.

Finally Jeff said, “Well, we’ve got enough for all of us.” He turned the boat around, and they made their way back upstream.

“Be careful. Don’t fall in the creek,” he warned, when Leah got out. He followed her, tied up the boat, and picked up his sack of frogs. “Never got so many big frogs in my whole life.” He picked up the gig too. “Let’s get back.”

They walked up the road by lantern light and moonlight, and when they got back to the house, he said, “Let’s go in the backyard—I’ll clean these tonight.”

Leah went with him, and when they got there she held the lantern for him.

“This won’t take long.” Jeff pulled a knife from his pocket and opened it.

Leah watched as he cleaned the frogs and admired how efficiently he did it. “I wish I could clean chickens as easy as you do frogs,” she said finally.

“Well, frogs don’t have feathers.” The amber light of the lantern picked up his bright eyes, and he laughed. “That’d be something, wouldn’t it—a frog with feathers!”

Soon the frogs were cleaned, and Jeff washed off their catch under the pump. "Pretty good night's work!" he said.

They went inside to find that Tom had gone to bed, but Jeff's father and Uncle Silas were still talking.

Looking up, Silas asked, "Did you get any?"

"Did I get any?" Jeff said. "You never saw such frogs!

"And look how dirty I am!" said Leah. "I'm going to wash up and go to bed. Good night, Jeff."

"Good night, Leah. We'll go again."

As soon as she was gone, the lieutenant grinned at his son. "She's not only pretty, she's a good helper, isn't she? Not every young woman would go frogging with a fellow. You'd better hang onto her."

Jeff said, "Pa, I wish this war was over and we were back in Kentucky."

Nelson Majors's face grew sober. "I wish it too. But you can never go back and be what you were." He looked over at his son, rose, and slapped him on the shoulder. "We just have to take what we are, where we are, and trust God," he said quietly. "Let's go to bed, Jeff."

*Bonnets and Bugles Series · 4*

# **THE SOLDIER BOY'S DISCOVERY**

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**GILBERT MORRIS**

**MOODY PUBLISHERS**  
CHICAGO

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# 1

## A Slight Case of Jealousy

Jeff left the thick woods and paused to look down on the house lying in the Kentucky valley below. Warm memories of days gone by flashed through his mind.

“I sure do hate to leave this and go back to the war!” he muttered. Then he shrugged his shoulders, hefted his flour sack full of slain rabbits, and made his way along the winding path, down the side of the mountain into the valley still misty in the early dawn.

The War Between the States had forced him and his family to leave Kentucky, which refused to leave the Union, and relocate in Confederate Virginia. This had been his first trip back since before the war began more than a year ago. It seemed sometimes that the fighting would go on forever. Often nightmares of Bull Run and other battles he had endured came back with sharp intensity, and Jeff would wake up in a cold sweat, thrashing around.

War hadn’t seemed so terrible when, at fifteen, he had persuaded his father, now Captain Nelson Majors, to allow him to join the Confederate army as a drummer boy. Now, as he thought of how the war might last for years, he grew despondent.

His time with his friends the Carters was at an end. The bright August sunshine had brought a rich tan to his face, and he had enjoyed every day of his visit. Leah Carter and Ezra, the young, wounded

ex-prisoner, were home safe; he could assure his father that little Esther was doing well with her foster family; and his father's troops needed the supplies he had collected. He couldn't stay any longer.

As he reached the foot of the mountain and made his way across a small creek that bent like an elbow, he cast a quick glance at the water, wondering if he had time to go fishing. He brightened. I'll get Leah. We can have one more fishing trip before I have to leave.

That thought cheered him, and he lifted his head and walked quickly to the Carters' small farmhouse. Going around to the back, he dropped his sack of game on the ground and pulled out his sharp knife to begin skinning the rabbits.

"Well, looks like you got enough to feed all of us."

Jeff looked up to see Mrs. Carter emerge from the house. She was strongly built, with pretty green eyes and blonde hair that was caught at the back of her head in a neat bun. She had been a second mother to Jeff Majors, and her daughter Leah had been his best friend since both learned to walk.

"Got five rabbits," he said proudly, holding up one of them. "Fat and thumping too. Nothing like a good mess of fried rabbit and poke salad, I always say."

Mary Carter looked amused. "I hope you'll let the rest of us have a bite or two, Jeff. You brought an appetite like a panther back from the war."

He knew she was as fond of him as if he were one of her own children.

"I'll go get breakfast started. I'm fixing you one of your special treats for supper tonight—apple pie!"

Jeff's teeth flashed in a broad smile. "Apple pie! Make one just for me, will you? I haven't had good apple pie since I first left Kentucky."

Jeff turned back to the job of skinning rabbits. Leah's mother watched him for a few minutes as she cooled off from the hot kitchen.

He was tall for his age—fifteen—with the blackest hair possible, as dark as a crow's. He had large hands and feet that he still hadn't grown into, and a pair of eyes so black that one had to look close to see the pupils. He had been stringy when he left Kentucky with his family a year ago, but now had begun to fill out.

When Jeff had the rabbits skinned, he brought them to the back porch, laid them in a row on the table, and then washed his hands thoroughly in the basin. After he threw the dirty water into the flower patch below the railing, he reached for the towel hanging from a nail by the back door. He stepped inside and smiled at Sarah Carter, working with her mother at the kitchen sink.

"Well, I've done my part," he announced. "Now, Sarah, we'll see if you can cook them." A sly look came over his face, and he grinned, "Tom told me to be sure and sample your cooking. Said he wouldn't marry a woman that couldn't cook."

Sarah, at eighteen, was one of the prettiest girls in the Pineville area. She had dark brown hair and very dark blue eyes, which she focused on Jeff now. "My cooking's good enough for him. I never saw him turn anything down of mine."

Her face flushed slightly.

Jeff knew she didn't like to be teased about his older brother. They had been very much in love before the war but now were separated for who

knew how long; nothing was certain anymore. Tensions weren't helped by the fact that Tom was a sergeant in the Confederate army while Sarah's brother, Royal, was a Union soldier.

At once Jeff realized he was on dangerous ground. He said quickly, "Better get a letter written if you want me to take it to Tom. I guess I'll be leaving pretty early in the morning."

He walked into the living room where he found Mr. Carter playing with Esther, Jeff's baby sister.

Dan Carter looked up, and a grin split his craggy face. "This baby's a lot smarter than you ever were, Jeff. Why, when you were your sister's age, I don't think you had any sense at all!"

Jeff picked the child up. The baby stared at him with wide blue eyes, and he tossed her in the air, making her scream with joy. "I guess she is pretty smart, Mr. Carter," he said. "Maybe girls are just smarter than boys." He winked at Leah's father as he tossed Esther once more.

Dan Carter returned his wink and then, gathering his long, thin legs beneath him, rose slowly from the rocking chair, moving carefully as people do who have known much sickness. His once lustrous brown hair, Jeff saw, had faded to a dull, gray-streaked, muddy brown, although his light blue eyes still shone with determined pride. His mouth was firm under a scraggly mustache. He'd been wounded terribly in the Mexican War and would never regain his former strength and vitality.

"Not feeling too well today, Mr. Carter?"

"Oh, I don't complain, Jeff," he protested. "As long as a man's able to get up and walk and get some good vittles—and be with his family—he shouldn't complain."

"Guess that's right." Jeff carried Esther on his shoulders across the room to where an older Carter child, Morena, sat on the floor making shadow figures against the floorboards in the bright morning sunlight that streamed through the open door.

Morena's hair was fully as blonde and her eyes were as blue as baby Esther's. She smiled up at Jeff but didn't move.

Jeff reached out and smoothed down her hair, saying fondly, "I'll miss you when I go, Morena."

It always saddened him when he looked at this child. She was as old as she would ever be, mentally. Physically, she looked like any other nine-year-old girl, but she had never learned to speak and could perform only the simplest chores, such as feeding and dressing herself. She was happy, it seemed, and for a while Jeff sat on the floor talking to her and allowing the baby to pull his hair with her chubby fingers.

"I don't know what we would've done if you folks hadn't taken Esther, Mr. Carter," Jeff said abruptly.

"Why, it was little enough to do, Jeff."

"Take a tiny baby—for only the Lord knows how long? And with your daughter Morena to care for already?" Jeff shook his head stubbornly. "No, sir, it was a real big thing!"

"If things had been the other way around, your family would have done the same for us," Dan Carter insisted, sitting back down.

"No way we can ever know that."

"Yes, there is."

"Why, you can't go back and do things over!"

"No, Jeff, that's right." Dan ran his hand over his head, thinking for a moment. "But you can know how people are. I've known your folks for a long

time. I'm telling you, you and your family would have done the same. Your mother—there never was a better woman!"

"I . . . I miss her every day."

"Only right you should, boy. And what would she have done if we couldn't have cared for Morena somehow?"

Jeff cocked his head to one side, then smiled. "She took in *everything*, Ma did—even sick birds and animals. Why, she took in a pesky baby fox once and nursed it back to health." He grinned at the memory. "The fool thing bit me! But she loved it."

"Yes, she was a loving woman. And what would she have done with a baby like Morena—or your Esther?"

"Loved her to death, I reckon."

"Well, there you are, Jeff." Dan smiled. "You don't have to keep on thanking us for taking care of your sister."

"It's a lot to take on, though."

"Not to Mrs. Carter, Sarah, and Leah! They dote on that little sister of yours—and so does Morena."

Jeff looked over to where Morena was looking down at the baby, cooing and stroking the fine blonde hair. He asked suddenly, "Mr. Carter, will Morena ever be any more growed up?"

"Only the good Lord knows that, Jeff."

"I wish she would get better. She's so pretty!"

Dan Carter's face showed a trace of sadness, but he said firmly, "We can't know God's ways, Jeff. But we can know that God is good and that somehow in the end Morena will be as bright and active as any other child."

"In heaven?"

“Yes, that’s right. I kind of like to think of that time, don’t you, Jeff?”

“You mean . . . heaven? When we get there?”

“Yes.” Dan smiled and added, “No wars, no droughts, no need for doctors—no politicians, either. Not like this place.”

Jeff’s face clouded as he thought through Mr. Carter’s comments. Finally he replied, “I guess I’m not a good enough Christian.”

“Why do you say that?”

“Well, I guess I’m not ready to go to heaven—not today, I mean.”

Mr. Carter laughed, and his eyes twinkled. “Enjoy the day, for the Lord has given it to us. ‘This is the day that the Lord hath made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.’ We can’t know when we’ll go, so we live for the Lord here until we go there.”

Jeff didn’t reply, his face darkening as thoughts of heaven led to thoughts of death—and how the war had brought death close to so many over the last year. He finally said, “Well, Ezra’s out of the war, anyway. He won’t have to fight anymore. Nobody wants a convalescing ex-prisoner of war on his front lines.”

“Yes, and I’m glad of it. I wish you were out too.”

“Me too, and Pa and Tom—and Royal, of course.”

“You know, Jeff, I think God put Ezra in that prison camp.”

“What for?” Jeff asked with surprise.

“Well, look at it,” Dan said slowly. “I can’t go off with Leah and leave this farm all the time with Mrs. Carter and Sarah and the children all alone, can I?”

“No, sir, I don’t think you can.”

“Well, it’s hard to find good help for a small farm. I tried pretty hard, and all I could come up with was hiring Ray Studdard from across the way. I couldn’t see doing anything else, as expensive as that would be. But here Ezra escapes from that Confederate prison camp, and he hides out in a farmhouse. How many farmhouses are there in that part of the country, Jeff?”

“Must be a thousand, Mr. Carter.”

“Yep, I’d say so. Ezra could have gone to any one of them. But he didn’t. He went to the *only* one where he’d have a chance to meet Leah. Now, that just *couldn’t* have been an accident!”

Jeff stared. “You think God does stuff like that? I mean . . . that He works things out for us?”

“He knows of the sparrow’s fall, Jeff, and we’re worth more than sparrows.”

Jeff shifted restlessly, then shook his head. “Too much for me to figure out,” he said finally. “Do you reckon Ezra will stay on for a long time?”

“The boy’s got no place else to go.” Mr. Carter shrugged. “Why are you asking, Jeff?”

“Oh, no reason. Just wondering.”

Jeff’s thoughts moved from Ezra—and Ezra’s budding friendship with Leah—to what a fine man Dan Carter was.

Even though he was too old for the army, and too sickly, he’d determined to do his best for the soldiers in the Union army. He’d persuaded his family that he should serve God by becoming a sutler, stocking his old wagon with supplies—including Bibles and tracts—and following the Yankee army throughout the first year of the war. He’d taken Leah with him because, even though she was just a young girl, she was strong, healthy, and smart.



Especially when he had his bad spells, she took much of the work off his shoulders.

Jeff looked about as he started to get up from the floor by Morena and Esther. "Where's Leah?"

"Oh, she's gone with Ezra. I think they went hunting birds' eggs, Jeff." He stopped abruptly, looking at Jeff's face.

The boy scooped up Esther. He swung her under his arm as he strode across the room and dumped her into Dan's arms. He muttered, "Should of known she'd rather hunt eggs than fish with me." He left the room without another word.

Almost as soon as Jeff had passed through the door, Mrs. Carter entered, her hands white with flour. Looking around, she asked with surprise, "Where's Jeff off to?"

"He just lit out after Leah and Ezra," Dan said. He gave his wife a look and shook his head. "I think he's a little bit upset."

"Upset about what?"

"Oh, I told him Ezra and Leah had gone egg hunting, and he clammed up and left with hardly a word."

She went over and looked out the window. She saw Jeff stalking off, his back straight and his steps almost military. Shaking her head, she turned back and said quietly, "Jeff hasn't taken much to Ezra. You'd think they would've become friends after Jeff helped Leah hide him the way he did."

Ezra Payne had served in the Union army and was taken captive at the Battle of Bull Run. He had escaped from prison, and Leah and Jeff helped him get away to Kentucky.

"Well, you know how strong Jeff is about Confederate rights, Mary. Might be he can't get over

Ezra being a Union soldier." Mr. Carter paused. "It's not like our Royal—or even my sutler work. Jeff's been like part of our family his whole life, but he don't have any history with Ezra."

"You're at least right on that account, Dan," she agreed. "Remember Leah told us about the set-to she and Jeff had when she first asked him to help her with Ezra."

"I don't know what's going to come of this." He shook his head. "Jeff's a good boy, but he's got hard feelings against the North."

"That's not the main cause of it, though," his wife murmured. She dusted the flour off her hands as she crossed the room, and then she lifted Esther out of Dan's lap. She pinched the baby's fat, rosy cheek, then turned to give her husband a direct look. "He's jealous of Ezra. I guess you see that, Dan. They've been awfully close, Leah and Jeff, all their lives."

"Why, they're only children!"

"I guess you don't have to be fifty years old to get possessive of somebody. Leah would be just as possessive of Jeff. I'm sorry for it, though Ezra is a fine young man. He hasn't had much of a chance in this world."

"No, he hasn't." Mr. Carter shook his head as he remembered what Ezra had told them. "Nobody should have to spend his childhood an orphan, working like a slave on some stranger's farm."

"I'm grateful we can give him some of the love he's never had." Mrs. Carter's voice came with conviction.

"But Mary, neither one of us wants Jeff hurt over Leah," he protested. "Maybe we ought not to ask Ezra to stay."

“Oh, we’ve got to! We promised. We can’t abandon him. Besides, you said yourself God brought him to give us the help we need now that Royal’s off to the war. Ezra’s such a good worker.” She put the baby down and sighed heavily. “Well, I have every confidence our prayers and Jeff’s basic good sense will make the difference. Jeff’s a good boy—he’ll just have to get over this.”

“Look! What’s this one, Leah?”

Leah Carter looked up into the thick foliage of the oak tree. She squinted at the egg Ezra was holding and said, “I can’t tell. Bring it on down.”

“Do you want all of them?”

“No, just one. Leave the rest to hatch.”

Ezra Payne came down the tree, swinging from branch to branch, using only one hand.

When he jumped to the ground, Leah laughed at him. “You’re just like a monkey, Ezra! I’ve never seen anyone who could climb a tree like you.”

Ezra smiled at the girl. He was not tall, but when he regained the weight he’d lost, he would present a formidable set of muscles to any opponent. His curly brown hair and sparkling teeth were in sharp contrast to his pale prison complexion. “Always liked to climb trees!” he said. “When I was with the army, they’d send me to the top of the tallest tree so’s I could scout out the enemy. Why, one time General McClellan himself was down at the foot with his officers.” He grinned more broadly, “There I was, telling the general of the whole Union army how it was!”

Leah laughed again as she took the egg. “That’s just another story you’re making up. Let me see that egg.” She ignored his protests of innocence, studied

the egg, and announced, "That's a catbird egg. We've got plenty of those."

"Have I got to take it back up to the nest?"

"Of course. You're not going to eat it raw!"

"I've seen the day I would, like when you found me stealing your groceries back in Virginia."

"That's different." Leah shrugged. She smiled at him suddenly, adding, "You weren't a very good burglar, Ezra. You made more noise than a wild pig."

"Didn't have much experience."

"I hope you never get any more."

Ezra climbed the tree and replaced the egg. When he was back on the ground, he affectionately slapped Leah on the shoulder and declared, "You must know every bird's egg there is, Leah."

"I ought to—been hunting them most of my life. Come on, let's go down by the river. Maybe we'll find a kingfisher nest. They're sure hard to find."

The two of them picked their way down a path overgrown with summer ferns, vines, and saplings until they came to the creek. Leah chattered happily all the time, telling Ezra about birds of all kinds. Finally she turned to him and exclaimed, "I'm so glad you've come to stay with our family, Ezra. With my brother, Royal, gone to the army, the farm's about to fall to pieces. My folks say you're an answer to prayer."

Ezra glanced at her quickly. His face grew serious. "Well, it's about the best thing that's ever happened to me, Leah. You can't know how different it is to work because you belong instead of just to get out of a beating."

He looked at the trees surrounding them and cocked his head, seeming to listen to the creek bubbling at their feet, before he said, "I've never had a

home, not a real one anyhow—just living with people, and then the army—and then prison camp.”

“My folks think a lot of you.”

“I never met anyone kinder.”

“They’re special, all right.”

“You’re sure lucky, Leah, to have good parents like them.”

Leah glanced quickly into his face and saw the honesty there. Honest pain and honest yearning. She was glad she’d helped Ezra escape from Virginia. He had been so sick that she thought he wouldn’t live. Now she said quickly, “Well, it’s good for everybody.”

Ezra fell in beside her as they walked along the creek, saying nothing for a while. Finally Ezra said, “I’m afraid Jeff doesn’t like it too much.”

Leah shot a glance at him. “He’ll be all right. Jeff just doesn’t warm up to people right away sometimes.”

“I like him fine, but he just doesn’t take to me.”

“Jeff’s too fast to make up his mind, I think. He does everything quick. He gets mad sometimes, then he’s over it in a flash and feels bad about it. Don’t worry about it, Ezra.”

They followed the creek for a while as it cut through the valley, then took a game trail across the meadow back toward the lane leading to the farmhouse. As they rounded the last bend, Ezra peered ahead, exclaiming, “Look! There’s Jeff now.”

Leah watched Jeff stride toward them down the lane. She could tell at a glance that he was angry. His long legs ate up the distance, and his fists were balled at his sides.

Leah’s voice betrayed her worry. “We’ve been gone longer than I thought, but he shouldn’t be

mad. He's the one who wanted to go hunting by himself while it was still dark." Jeff pointedly ignored Ezra and focused on Leah's face. "I've been looking for you."

"I'm glad you got back, Jeff. Did you get any rabbits?"

"A few," he said shortly. "I thought we were going fishing?"

"Oh, Jeff, I didn't think you would be back in time."

"I was back in plenty of time."

"Well, it's still not too late." She rested her hand on his arm. "Let's go later this afternoon when the sun's not so hot. We can catch a few before supper." Still grasping Jeff's arm, she turned to Ezra. "You can come too, Ezra."

"No, it's too late now." Jeff pulled his arm away, turned without another word, and loped down the road.

Leah whispered urgently, "Ezra, he's upset. Let me go talk to him." She ran quickly and caught up with Jeff, half skipping to keep up with his long strides. "Don't walk so fast," she pleaded, pulling on his arm to slow his pace.

Jeff paused, his face flushed. His lips were drawn tightly together, and he wouldn't look at her.

Leah bit her lip. She was annoyed. After all, he had been the one to leave and go hunting alone. Now she said sharply, "Jeff, don't be like that. We still have time to go fishing—and we can go run a trotline down by the rocks tonight."

"No, I guess not."

"You're just being stubborn." She pulled him to a stop, and he turned to face her.

What Jeff saw was a young woman of fourteen with green eyes and blonde hair. She was tall for a girl and had sometimes complained that she was as tall as a crane. Jeff noticed that she had filled out a great deal since he had left and had become far more like a young woman than the scrawny girl he had left behind.

He said shortly, "I don't know why you have to spend all your time with him!"

"Jeff, you're just being silly."

"I don't think it's silly. He's the enemy, Leah. He's fighting for the North."

"Well, so is Royal, if you'll remember. We've been over all this before. Besides, Ezra's not fighting for anybody now."

Hot words began to fall from their lips. Both had tempers, and, while they were growing up, more than one fiery argument had separated them for a time. They usually got over it pretty quickly, but this time Jeff refused to be pacified. Finally, he made a big mistake. He blurted out, "You're nothing but a Yankee, Leah Carter!"

This raised Leah's temper another notch, and she shot back, tears in her eyes, "Well, if I'm a Yankee, then you're nothing but a ragtag Rebel!" She turned and ran down the road toward the house.

He stood watching her go, feeling about as miserable as he ever had in his life, but he was too stubborn to admit it. "Well, if that's the way she wants to be, she can just have Ezra Payne and the whole Union army!"

*Bonnets and Bugles Series · 5*

# **BLOCKADE RUNNER**

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**GILBERT MORRIS**

**MOODY PUBLISHERS**  
CHICAGO



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# 1

## A Grown-up Party

Oh, no, Leah, I think your dress is much prettier than mine!" Lucy Driscoll turned her head to one side, touched her dimple with a forefinger, and nodded with a smile. "That green matches your eyes exactly."

Leah Carter flushed with pleasure and examined herself in the mirror. She was wearing a muslin dress printed in a paisley pattern of coral and white with green trim on the collar and sleeves. Her skirt was in three tiers and very full.

She touched her honey-colored hair, which was done up in the newest fashion, and her eyes glowed with excitement. Nevertheless, she quickly said, "Well, I don't think it's as pretty as yours, Lucy."

She was accustomed to being second in any competition regarding clothing, for Lucy Driscoll was the daughter of John and Edith Driscoll, one of the wealthiest planter families in the Richmond area. Lucy *was* a beautiful girl—small, well-shaped, and her blonde hair and blue eyes exactly what they should be. The dress she wore was more ornate than most grown women wore and was made of green silk with pink lace flounces.

Leah had come to pay Lucy a weeklong visit. As the two girls giggled and dressed and arranged each other's hair, Leah thought how strange it was that they had become friends, for they had not always been on such good terms.

Lucy Driscoll was a Rebel to the core, believing in the Southern Confederacy with all her heart. Leah, on the other hand, came from Kentucky, a border state. Her brother was in the Union army, and her father was a sutler, serving the Union troops. The two girls had not been at all friendly at first, but Lucy had changed greatly, Leah thought, smiling.

"It's so nice that you invited me to stay with you, Lucy." Leah smiled. "Do you think we dare wear some of that rice powder you found?"

Lucy giggled. "I don't see why not. After all, we're practically grown up. I mean, after all, we're fourteen years old, going on fifteen."

The two girls delved into the cosmetics that had belonged to Lucy's sister, and finally Lucy exclaimed, "We'd better go down! I think I hear the music already."

"I wouldn't want to be late," Leah said.

Lucy's eyes gleamed. "I would!" she exclaimed. "If you go to a party early, nobody notices you—but when you go in late like this, everybody stops to stare." She laughed and took Leah by the arm. "I'm just joking, but I'm so excited—our first grown-up ball! And some of the young officers will ask us to dance."

"I'm more excited about meeting Belle Boyd than any officers," Leah said. "I mean, she's the most famous Confederate spy in the whole South. She's a real celebrity."

"Oh, it'll be fun meeting her all right."

Lucy was rather spoiled with meeting celebrities. She had met Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, and Jeb Stuart. They had all been at her parents' home at one time or another.

"I'm more excited about this dance card," she said. Lucy held up her card, and her eyes sparkled. "How many dances are you going to give Cecil?"

Leah flushed slightly. "Oh, I don't know," she muttered. She was much shyer than Lucy, having grown up on a farm. She'd had no experience in ballroom dancing at all until she came to take care of her Uncle Silas here in Virginia. Trying now to look casual about the whole thing, she said, "He probably won't even ask me—not with you around in that dress."

"Oh, yes, he will. He's crazy about you, Leah." Lucy nodded. She was a Southern belle to the bone, having grown up with beaux and parties and balls. Her older sister had been the most beautiful eligible belle in Richmond, so Lucy was fully aware of all the ways of flirting with young men.

They went down the beautiful curving staircase where they encountered a couple who had just entered.

"I don't believe you've met Mr. and Mrs. Pollard, have you, Leah?" Lucy said. "Mr. Pollard is the editor of the *Richmond Examiner*." She reached over and patted the big man's hand. "He's not only the best-looking editor in the South but the most important."

John Pollard was a tall, portly man with longish gray hair and brown, friendly eyes. "Now, don't you start flirting with me," he teased Lucy. "My wife will be jealous."

Mrs. Pollard was a small woman with carefully dressed reddish hair and very light blue eyes. She smiled. "If he were a few years younger, I'd take him away right now." She turned to Leah and said, "I've

heard so much about you from your Uncle Silas. How is your family in Kentucky?"

"Oh, they're fine. I miss them a great deal, of course."

"I'm sure you do. Well—"

Mrs. Pollard was interrupted when a tall young man with the blackest possible hair, black as a crow's wing, joined them. He had well-set black eyes and was tanned in a very attractive fashion so that his teeth shone when he smiled.

"Why, hello, Jeff!" Lucy said quickly. "Have you met Mr. and Mrs. Pollard?"

The introductions were made, and Mr. Pollard examined Jeff's uniform. It was ash gray with brass buttons and looked very good on him. "What's your unit, soldier?"

"I'm in the Stonewall Brigade," Jeff Majors said proudly.

"You look so young!" Mrs. Pollard said.

"I'm almost sixteen," Jeff said quickly. "I'm a drummer boy right now, but it won't be long before I'll be in the regular army."

He turned to the two girls. "I've come to get my name on your programs before those other fellows get all the dances." He grinned. "Put me down for half of them."

Lucy laughed. "Why, you bold thing! I won't do any such thing as that—but you can have two."

Jeff winked at her, then turned to Leah. The two had grown up together, and their families were closely intertwined. As a matter of fact, Leah's family was keeping Jeff's baby sister, Esther. Since Jeff's mother had died and there had been no one else to care for the baby, the Carter family had generously volunteered.

“Well, I’ll have all of yours then, Leah.”

“No, you won’t.”

Another young man, dressed in a beautifully tailored brown suit, shoved his way in front of Jeff. “I’m having the dances with Leah. You may be in the army, but you can’t hog all the good-looking girls.”

Cecil Taylor was the same age as Jeff. He was rather thin with chestnut hair and bright blue eyes. His parents were almost as wealthy as Lucy’s, and of course the two sets of parents had often whispered about how nice it would be if Cecil and Lucy fell in love and got married. Then, together they would have the biggest plantation in the South.

Mr. and Mrs. Pollard drifted away, and the two boys began to argue over dances. But they were soon swamped by soldiers. The two girls were young, but girls in the South matured early, and the young lieutenants themselves were mostly not over seventeen or eighteen.

Lucy had her arm seized by Jeff, who led her off to the dance floor. She looked back over her shoulder and smiled at Cecil, whereupon Jeff said sharply, “You watch out for that Cecil. He’s not always a gentleman such as a young man should be.”

“Don’t you worry,” Cecil retorted. “Jeff’s the one to look out for.” Turning to Leah, he said, “There’s the music. I’ve got me the prettiest girl in Richmond, and I propose to have her all to myself as much as possible.”

It was a beautiful experience for Leah. As she whirled around the floor, her hoop skirt swinging, she remembered that the first time she had come to this place it had not been so. She had come wearing

rather plain clothes, and Lucy had cruelly interrogated her about her Northern sympathies.

Now, however, she was having a wonderful time. The oak floor was polished, and lights glistened from the chandeliers. At the sides of the room, silver trays and crystal glasses were lined up on a snow-white tablecloth along with all sorts of refreshment.

“You’d never know a war was going on, would you?” Cecil murmured.

Leah thought of the wounded soldiers she had visited in the hospital at Chimborazo. They had been so pathetic that sometimes she had to leave so that they could not see the tears that came to her eyes.

Looking around the ballroom, she thought about how, even on the streets of Richmond, clothes were wearing thin, groceries were nonexistent in some cases, and the Confederacy was slowly being squeezed to death by the blockade that the Union had thrown along the coastline. Only a few swift-sailing blockade runners dared brave the Yankee gunboats to carry cotton for sale in England, returning with the precious commodities that kept the South alive.

“No, you wouldn’t know there’s a war. This is very nice.” She looked over to where Jeff was dancing with Lucy. He was very tall, and Lucy was so small that she had to look up at him. “I wish I were tiny like Lucy,” Leah said suddenly. “I feel like a big old cow!”

Cecil stared at her in surprise, “What makes you think such a thing?”

“Oh, I don’t know. I just feel that way.”

“Well,” Cecil said, “stop thinking that way.” He glanced over and said, “They do make a nice-looking couple, don’t they? Wouldn’t be surprised but what Jeff didn’t fall in love with her. Most fellows do. I did!”

“Oh, you two were just childhood playmates.”

“Well, that’s true enough, and I guess people don’t often fall in love with people they grew up next door to.”

“Sometimes they do.”

Leah’s answer was so short that Cecil stared at her. Then he seemed to suddenly remember that Leah and Jeff had grown up together just as he and Lucy had. “You know, I think you’re stuck on Jeff.”

Leah blushed and bit her lip. “Don’t be silly,” she said.

Just at that moment the band reached the end of the piece, and Leah was claimed by a short, fat young lieutenant with a moon face and a thick Southern accent. He could not dance very well, but he was amusing. Leah found herself laughing at some of his outlandish remarks.

The dance had been going on for thirty minutes when a woman came into the room in the company of Mr. and Mrs. Pollard. Lucy and Leah were at the table with Cecil and Jeff, sampling the punch.

“Look! There’s Belle Boyd,” Lucy said. “Come on, let’s go meet her.” They crossed the room, and when they reached the threesome, Lucy smiled and said, “Miss Boyd, I’ve just *got* to meet you. My name is Lucy Driscoll.” She introduced her friends quickly and added, “Oh, Miss Belle, we’ve heard so much about you!”

Belle Boyd, a young woman of about twenty, was not really beautiful. Her nose was a little too



prominent, and she had a very determined chin. But she had a trim figure, and her dark hair was worn in curls. Her best feature was her fine, dark blue eyes, which she now put on the young people in front of her. "I'm happy to meet all of you," she said.

"Oh, tell us about some of your adventures saving the Stonewall Brigade," Lucy said quickly.

She turned to Jeff. "Jeff is in the Stonewall Brigade, and so are his father and his brother."

"Now here!" Mr. Pollard exclaimed. "We don't have time for Miss Boyd to tell stories."

He was right, for the young officers in their ash gray uniforms began crowding around, all clamoring for a dance with Miss Belle Boyd. She was sometimes called the Siren of the Shenandoah, sometimes the Rebel Spy. Already she had been arrested four times by Union authorities but each time had managed to obtain her freedom. She again turned her wonderful eyes on Leah, Lucy, and Jeff, saying quickly, "I'll be staying for a visit with your parents, Lucy. We'll have plenty of time to talk."

As Belle Boyd whirled off in the arms of a tall captain, Lucy said, "Isn't that exciting! She's so pretty!"

"She's not as pretty as you," Jeff observed. "Come on, this is my dance, Lucy." They moved away, Lucy's dress sweeping in wide circles to the waltz tune that the band played.

"Well, that's exciting—to get to meet Belle Boyd and actually talk to her. She's really something!" Jeff said.

"Yes, she is. I read stories about her in some of the magazines, but I never thought I'd get to meet her."

Leah's head was swimming from all the dances she'd had. She could not remember the names of all the young men she'd met.

Finally Cecil whispered, "Let's go get some more refreshments."

He got some cake and punch, handed a plate and cup to Leah, and said, "Come on, let's get out of this noise. I haven't had a chance to talk to you for all these blasted soldiers!"

"Don't call them that!" Leah protested.

She followed him out into a small garden area paved with flagstone. When he closed the French doors, the music became soft and muted. "Hey, this is nice, isn't it? Here, let's sit on this bench!"

Leah sat down and took a bite of cake. "This is good," she said. She looked around and noted the huge trees surrounding the Driscoll mansion. "I love magnolias," she said. "Their blossoms smell sweeter than anything."

Cecil took a swallow of punch and turned to her. "No better than you. They don't smell any better than you. You've been using perfume."

Leah flushed, for she had used some of the scent that Lucy had appropriated from her sister. "That's not nice to talk about what a girl smells like."

Cecil grinned. He was a happy-go-lucky boy. "Well, it is if they smell good," he argued.

Leah liked Cecil a great deal. He was an alert young man, full of fun and oftentimes practical jokes, and she enjoyed his teasing. He began talking about how in another two years he would be able to join the army.

Leah said quickly, "Oh, I hope the war's over by that time."

“Well, if the Yankees give up, it will be,” Cecil said confidently.

“I don’t know—the South is losing so many men.”

“So are the blue bellies.”

“I know, but they have so many more. Their armies just keep filling up.”

“Sometimes numbers don’t count so much.”

“What does that mean?”

“Well, in the story about Gideon in the Bible, the Israelites only had about three hundred men—and they defeated their enemies.”

“That’s not the same thing!”

“Why not?”

“Because that happened a long time ago!”

“Well then, look at the American Revolution. The British had more soldiers than the colonists—but they didn’t win.” Cecil suddenly asked, “Which side are you really for, Leah? I’ve never really understood that. I mean, your brother’s in the Union army, and Jeff’s in the Confederate army. You’ve got an uncle here that’s for the South. But your family—I guess they have to be for the North. What about you?”

It was a question that Leah had never been able to answer. She hated the idea of slavery with all of her heart. She also hated the war. But it had been obvious for some time that the North and the South would never be reconciled by peaceful means.

“I don’t know,” she finally said and dropped her head. “I just wish it were over.”

Cecil was a sensitive young man. He obviously saw that he had disturbed her with his talk of the war and was sorry for it. Then his eyes gleamed with humor, and he said, “Leah!” He put down his

cup. "I made my mother a promise one time. Do you think you ought to keep your promises? Especially to your mother?"

"Why, of course I do." Leah grew curious. "What did you promise her?"

"I promised her I would never kiss a girl until I was seventeen."

"Well, I think that's good." Leah nodded firmly.

Cecil reached over and took her arms. He was laughing as he said, "But I've decided to make an exception in your case." Then, before she could move, he kissed her on the lips.

Just as he did, the door opened behind them.

Leah pulled away from Cecil and leaped to her feet.

There stood Jeff with Lucy, staring at them. Lucy hid a smile behind her hand, but Jeff's dark eyes were angry. He said, "I think it's about time for you two to come inside."

"Oh, don't be such an old stick, Jeff." Lucy said.

But Jeff turned and walked away, and she followed him.

"I sure made old Jeff mad that time, didn't I?" Cecil whistled softly. He stared at Leah, saying, "I'm sorry. I was just teasing."

"Oh, he'll be all right. Jeff's just got kind of a hot temper."

Later on, Leah found it was not all right. She had one more dance with Jeff, and he did not say a word to her. He kept his head high and his eyes fixed over her head at the other dancers.

"Don't be mad, Jeff. Cecil was just teasing."

"None of my business what you do!" he said shortly. "If you want to go around kissing everybody that comes along—well, that's fine with me! 'Course,

I expect your family would be pretty disappointed in you if they found out.”

Instantly Leah grew angry. “I suppose you’re going to run and write a letter telling them—or perhaps tell Uncle Silas!”

“Well, somebody needs to tell them.”

“You’re just an old tattletale! Besides, I bet you kissed Lucy, didn’t you?”

Jeff’s face suddenly flushed. “That’s none of your business,” he said. “I’m older than you are.”

“One year older! That makes you grown up, does it?”

“It means I’m older than you are!”

“That doesn’t mean anything!”

Jeff grew more angry. “You have a stubborn streak in you. Everybody knows that.”

“I have a stubborn streak?” Leah glared at him, her eyes flashing. “You’re the one who’s stubborn—and unreasonable too!”

“You think it’s reasonable to kiss a boy out in the garden?”

Actually Leah was not proud of her scene with Cecil, but as many people do when they’re feeling guilty, she tried to cover up her feelings by attacking others. “You’re a fine one to talk! You made a fool of yourself over Lucy the first time you ever saw her.”

“I never kissed her in the garden!”

“You would if you got the chance!”

“I would not!”

The argument flared up further, and finally Jeff turned and walked off.

That night, in the room the two girls shared, Lucy said cautiously, “Don’t worry about Jeff. He’ll be all right.”

“I don’t care if he is or not!” Leah said. She turned over and said no more. She was so angry and upset that tears came to her eyes, but she kept very still, not allowing Lucy to dream that she was crying.

For a long time she lay there, going over the terrible argument with Jeff, and finally admitted to herself that she’d been in the wrong—at least partially.

*But we’ll make it—we always do.*

Yet somehow she felt worse than she had over the arguments she’d had with Jeff in the past. Finally she drifted off to sleep—and had bad dreams all night.