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DAUGHTERS OF THE FAITH SERIES

Freedom's Pen

A STORY BASED ON THE LIFE OF FREED SLAVE AND AUTHOR PHILLIS WHEATLEY

Wendy Lawton

MOODY PUBLISHERS
CHICAGO

Contents

Under the Baobab Tree

The Gambia, Africa 1761

She heard it again—that unmistakable *bwaamb*, *bwaamb* sound. It came from far away, but she was sure it was the *tama*, the talking drum.

Janxa stood still, straining to hear. She waited. Though she could do nothing about the buzz of insects and chattering of monkeys over the wet rice field, she barely breathed. Yes, it was the rhythmic *tama* voice carrying through the forest. The tonal variations sounded like a man talking.

"What do the drums say, *Maamanding*?" Janxa could pick out a few words, but her mother understood the language of the drums. "What are they saying?"

"Hush." Her mother had been bending over the young rice plants all morning, weeding and thinning. She planted her hands on either side of her back and straightened her body up, rubbing circles on her back. Her dress—her

mbubba—had been tied up between her legs to keep it out of the water as she worked. She reached down to untie it as she continued to listen to the talking drum.

Other women who'd been working the rice fields stopped to listen as well. Janxa could see excitement light their eyes.

"What?" she asked her mother.

"The *tama* is from the village downriver. The *griot* is leaving their village. He will be here before the sun goes to sleep."

The *griot*!

Janxa wrapped her thin arms around herself as if she needed to squeeze in her excitement to keep it from exploding. Janxa had been birthed just before the start of the rains. But now, she had already passed her seventh rainy season. At seven, she was big enough to help her mother in the rice field and to keep her little brothers entertained back in the village. And, at seven, she had seen the *griot* at least that many times. Maybe more. She knew the fathers had been expecting him, but they never knew for sure when he'd arrive. Sometimes he had to stop in a village for a naming ceremony or to sing praises for the visit of an important person.

She had heard that some villages, very big villages, had their own *griots*. What would it be like to have the storyteller in your village every single day? How would you get any work done?

Her mother reached down to pick up her basket. "Come, child, we must go back and prepare food." She called out to the other women as they gathered children and tools. "What will you cook?"

"I have groundnuts to prepare," said one of the young

mothers as she took a length of bright cloth and tied her baby around her chest for the walk back to the village.

The thought of groundnuts made Janxa's stomach rumble. She loved them no matter how they were cooked. She especially liked to eat them fresh.

"I will prepare *couscous*," said Dunxa. "My son supplies me with more millet from his last harvest than I can possibly use."

Janxa smiled. She knew the other women had grown tired of hearing Dunxa brag about her son. Today it wouldn't matter though. The *griot* was coming. Tonight would be a celebration.

As she balanced her mother's tools and hurried to keep up, she couldn't help thinking about the *griot*. She wondered if he'd bring his son.

"Why must the *griot* pass down his calling to his son?" she asked her mother. "What if a new storyteller were to come from another family?"

"It goes from father to son because it is Allah's will," her mother answered.

She should have known. That was the answer to everything. "But what if Allah chose someone else to become a *griot*?"

Her mother didn't answer. She just picked up her pace.

Janxa had to run and hop through the thick elephant grass to keep up. "What if a girl wanted to become a *griot*?"

Her mother stopped walking and turned to look at Janxa, who stopped as well. *Maamanding* spoke no words, but her look told her daughter she had asked one too many questions. "Come, daughter. We have work to do." Her mother turned

again toward the village. "Women's work."

When they got to the village her mother went straight to their hut to begin making maize porridge. "Go fetch your brothers home," she said.

As Janxa drew close to the grandmother's hut she saw her little brother, Baaku, playing with sticks on the packed dirt outside the door. The grandmother sat on a bench holding the baby. Baaku ran to Janxa. "Did you hear the *tama*? Did you hear about the *griot*? He's coming."

"I did," she said, laughing at the excitement in her brother's voice. She turned toward the grandmother. "How do you fare today, Grandmother?" The grandmother was not her own grandmother, but everyone called her that out of respect.

"I fare well, Janxa." She jostled the baby to wake him. "I hope this one's not too sleepy to walk."

"I can carry him."

The grandmother made a hooting sound. "You are too thin to carry this one." She squeezed the baby's thigh. "Little Caaman is nearly your size already."

Nothing irritated Janxa more, though she would never let on so as to dishonor the grandmother. She knew she was small, but it didn't mean she couldn't do things. It was true, her brothers were both born plump and sturdy. They had broad features and a rich dark skin. When her mother rubbed palm oil on them they were beautiful. Why did her own build have to be thin and delicate?

"He will walk," she said to the grandmother as she helped Caaman wake. "If they are good, I'll tell them a story while *Maamanding* prepares food."

Both boys clapped their hands. "We love Janxa's stories,"

Baaku said. He began to run ahead but stopped and came back to the grandmother. "Thank you for taking care of us today."

She patted his head before he took off. Janxa and Caaman followed.

"Slow down, Baaku. Caaman cannot keep up with you."

"Can you start the story?" he asked as he slowed his pace.

Janxa took a breath and began to wind out a tale in the soft tones of their Wolof language. Anyone listening closely could catch the rhythm of the talking drum in her telling. The rise and fall of her words conjured up crafty baboons, wise elephants, and no-good hyenas. Her brothers slowed their pace so as not to miss a single word.

The *griot* had been as good as his word. He arrived in the village just as the sun slipped behind the trees. He was welcomed by all the fathers and given the place of honor under the giant baobab tree. The oldest and most honored men sat nearest him, followed by the younger men and then the boys. The women and girls served food, carrying large decorated bowls made from calabash gourds. Even Janxa carried food.

The *griot*'s son sat on the ground near his father's feet. He must have seen about ten or twelve rains. Janxa offered him a maize cake. How fortunate he was to be the son of a great *griot*.

Following the meal everyone stood to stretch. The women cleared the baskets and gourds and carried them to the huts. As soon as they returned, the drummer began to beat out a rhythm on the *tama*. It started slow but rose to a fevered pitch as dancers jumped into a clearing in the center of the

swaying people. The *griot* joined the beat of the *tama* with music from his *kora*. Janxa loved watching the explosive movements of the dancers. They'd jump and lift their knees high into the air, colorful *mbubbas* flapping, all while keeping perfect rhythm.

After the dances and the food, everyone settled back to listen to the *griot*. The women sat apart from the men and boys but close enough that they didn't miss a word. Janxa settled herself against a nearby tree to listen.

The village elder began by asking questions about the other places the *griot* and his entourage had visited.

"I will tell you in due time," the *griot* answered, "but first let me sing of your village." He placed his *kora* in front of him and began to pluck the strings and sing.

You offer shelter to the wandering.
Under your tree the wise ones sit and talk.
You feed the children and the ancient ones.
Under your tree the wise ones sit and talk.
Your fields yield rice, juju beans, and millet.
Under your tree the wise ones sit and talk.
You tend to the goats and chase the baboons.
Under your tree the wise ones sit and talk.

He continued to sing praises of their village. Janxa watched his son mouthing the words after his father. Before he could become a *griot* he'd have to learn how to measure a village at a glance and create a song for them without any practice. He'd also have to be able to recite all the history of their people from as far back as anyone could remember.

Once the *griot* finished the praise song, he began to sing songs and tell stories of the great deeds of their people. How did he remember all the names, generation after generation? As her mother stood up to leave, carrying a sleepy Caaman and trailing a reluctant Baaku, Janxa begged to stay. She looked over at her father and he nodded, so her mother let her stay.

She could have listened all night. The *griot*'s stories would stay forever in her memory, mingled with African night sounds—birds fussing as they settled in to roost, the roar of a faraway lion, the eerie laugh of a hyena scavenging for food, and the soft wind rustling the leaves of the baobab.

"After morning prayers," the *griot* said finally as the fire began to die, "I'll tell news of other people and about the great trouble."

No one dishonored him by asking further questions, but Janxa could see that many wanted to hear the news tonight.

She hadn't realized how tired she was, but when her father came over and picked her up to carry her back to her mother's hut she didn't protest. As she snuggled into his arms, she thought, *This is my happy seat—right in the middle of my family.*

Janxa watched her brothers sleep while her mother went out before dawn to draw water. Caaman made little sucking sounds with his lips as he slept. What kind of men would her brothers become? Would they be great hunters like their father?

She sat in the doorway of the hut so she could witness the

beginning of the day and smell the richness of the damp earth before the hot sun began baking it.

Janxa watched her mother coming back with the gourd filled with water. For as long as she could remember, her mother had greeted the sun by raising her gourd high above her head and pouring a drizzle of water out as an offering. She'd then fall to her knees in prayer. Janxa loved watching her mother, straight and tall, lifting water to the sky.

"Come," her mother said as she brought the remaining water to the hut, "let's feed the family and go to the baobab to hear what the *griot* will tell us. Take this bowl to your father. When he has eaten you may go with him, and I'll meet you there."

Janxa took the bowl of porridge to her father's hut and waited quietly while he finished it. She washed the gourd with sand until it was clean.

"Will you go to your mother or come with me?" her father asked.

"May I come with you?"

He smiled at her. "Yes, little one, but you know you cannot sit with me."

She knew that. The fathers were honored and always sat apart. The boys as well. Her father even lived in a hut set apart from theirs—that was the way of her people.

As they drew closer, they could see that the *griot* had already started to sing a song of the morning.

When he finished, they all sat silently, waiting for him to begin.

"The treachery of the *tubaab* grows."

Janxa knew the word *tubaab*. It meant people with no color

—white people. She heard the stories whispered often, but she'd never seen a *tubaab*. She had seen a white baboon once, but never a white man.

"The *tubaab* continues to steal our people. He's now taking more than just the slaves captured in battle."

Janxa knew that when one tribe fought another tribe, they took captives. Her village had not fought in her lifetime, so she didn't know anyone who'd been taken, but the mothers talked about people they once knew who never came back. They believed those captives had been sold to the *tubaab*.

"More often now, *tubaab* has African helpers who ambush warriors caught alone in the bush or young men guarding goats or crops." He stopped and pulled a piece of elephant grass from the ground. "They disappear never to be heard from again."

"What happens to these captives?" the elder asked.

"None have returned to tell. There are some who believe the *tubaab* take our people to eat them."

Janxa's heart beat hard against her chest. *Eat them?* She looked at her father. What would she do if someone took her father? She jumped when she heard the sudden chattering commotion of a group of monkeys far up in the branches of the baobab. Had they seen something? She looked at the faces of the fathers, but no one seemed concerned.

"They've begun taking many more of our people than ever before. We need to be on the lookout for these evil ones." He stopped and put a hand on his son's shoulder. "Even more troubling is that they've been taking children when they can't find men or women."

Children! Janxa looked around for her mother and scooted closer to where she sat with Baaku and Caaman. Who would ever take a child away from family? What kind of people were these *tubaab*?

DAUGHTERS OF THE FAITH SERIES

Courage to Run

A STORY BASED ON THE LIFE OF HARRIET TUBMAN

Wendy Lawton

MOODY PUBLISHERS
CHICAGO

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How Long, O Lord?

Araminta Ross!"

Minty heard Annie's call, but the young girl's toes just wiggled deeper into the warm dirt as she sat partially hidden by the drying bush. A slender snake slowly zigged its way toward the fields, enticed out of winter hibernation by the balmy morning. The buzz of insects announced that the cold spell was over. Minty hugged her brown knees as she lifted her face to the warmth and opened her mouth as if to invite the sunshine deep inside.

"Minty, you ain't foolin' Annie. Git yourself in here and tend to these little'uns." The timeworn woman punctuated her words with the sound of a willow *switch* whipping against the door frame of the cabin.

It didn't take much for Minty to imagine the feel of that *switch* against the back of her legs. The old slave woman rarely used it, but it was long remembered by the children.

"Comin'." Minty jumped up and tried to brush the dirt

off her rough linen *shift*. She gave up. It was so soiled already, a little more dirt hardly mattered. "I'm comin' fast as I can, Annie."

"You help git these babies fed, or Annie'll teach you some sense."

Annie talked tough, but Minty already knew that most of it was bluster. Annie loved her babies, including the grown ones like Minty.

A trough half full of cornmeal mush was placed on the hard-packed dirt floor and children toddled toward it from all sides of the cramped cabin. Minty handed pieces of mussel shells to those children who were old enough to use them as utensils. The littlest ones used their fingers and managed to find their mouths most of the time. Children weren't issued clothing until they were almost ready to work, so cleanup was always easy.

Minty was born a slave on a plantation near Bucktown in Tidewater, Maryland. Her *basket name,* given to her on the day of her birth six or seven years ago, was Araminta, but everyone called her Minty. When full grown, she would be called by her mother's given name—Harriet. Her mother never used the name Harriet. She went by Old Rit, even to her children most of the time. Minty didn't see why she couldn't have Harriet now since Old Rit never used it. Her mother just laughed when she asked, and told her, "Be patient, honeygirl. By 'n' by. Jes' be patient."

Minty hated those words. They were her mother's answer

to everything. How could she be patient when she longed to jump and run and grow up all at the same time?

Minty's father, Ben, and Old Rit were slaves on the same plantation, owned by Edward Brodas. Most of the slaves on the Brodas Plantation lived in the Quarter—a collection of ramshackle cabins located in a dirt clearing between the barn and the fields.

Minty loved the closeness of the cabins and the way it made all the slaves in the Quarter sort of feel like family. Minty's cabin was like all the others—rough-hewn timber walls chinked with mud, covered by a sagging roof. Inside was a single room with a packed dirt floor. A *wattle and daub* fireplace stood against one end. There were no partitions or windows. The dark, smoky room was home to Minty's entire family. Piles of worn quilts and scratchy blankets lined the walls and served as the only furnishings, but most of the living was done outdoors anyway. In one corner, a deep hole had been dug out of the floor. An old board covered the opening. Rit's hoard of sweet potatoes stayed cool long after harvest in this potato hole.

A broken piece of mirror was fastened to the wall near the door by two bent nails. It was too high for Minty, but every now and then Ben would lift her up so she could see. Wasn't much to see. She was small for her age, but sturdy. "Built like a bantam rooster," Ben used to say. Minty liked that. Those bantys were tough little birds. She laughed at the thought of herself hopping around the yard, scrapping for corn.

Old Rit worked in the Brodas house all day, helping the Missus. Ben worked in the woods cutting timber.

"Didn't used to cut so much timber," Ben said one day

after work, "but times been settling hard on the Brodas Plantation lately."

Many nights Minty pretended to be asleep and listened to her parents' whispered conversations.

"Started on a new stand today, Rit," her father whispered, talking about a new grove of trees he was to cut down.

"What'll he do when the timber runs out?" Rit asked.

Minty could always tell when her mother was worried because she'd rub her thumb and finger together real fast-like. Her rough hands made a sound like someone was sanding wood. That sandpapery rhythm often lasted long into the night.

"Tobaccy's bad these days. Not much call for cotton, or wheat neither," Ben whispered. "Just 'smornin' I heard the field hands marking time with a singin' of 'Poor Massa.'"

"Master Brodas best not catch wind of it," Rit said. The rubbing sound got faster. Minty knew the words of the song:

Poor Massa, so they say;
Down in the heel, so they say;
Not one shilling, so they say;
God Almighty bless you, so they say.

Rit slowly sucked air between her teeth—a sound that meant trouble was brewing. "Been noticing things lookin' pretty shabby 'round the Big House. Don't look like Master's growing enough of anything to keep the place goin'."

"Seems Master's mostly raisin' colored folk these days for hirin' out or worse," Ben said.

Minty knew what her father meant by "worse." Each time

the slave trader came to nearby Cambridge, Master rode into town. Since the invention of the cotton gin, plantations down South couldn't seem to get enough slaves. Congress halted the slave trade in 1808, so no more slave ships could land, bringing newly captured slaves from Africa. The only way to get more slaves was to buy them from other plantations.

Each time Master returned, Minty's stomach ached and she couldn't get a bite of food to go down. She waited for the sorrowing to begin. It didn't take long. Screams and cries erupted throughout the Quarter as families were told that one of their own had been "sold South." Late into the night, groups of slaves huddled together to sing in mournful tones:

This time tomorrow night,
Where will I be?
I'll be gone, gone, gone,
Down to Tennessee.

Sometimes they recited Scripture in unison: "The Lord is my Shepherd . . ." When the reciting finished, a lone voice broke the silence:

Swing low, sweet chariot,
Comin' for to carry me home.

Other voices joined in to swell the song:

Swing low, sweet chariot,
Comin' for to carry me home.

When all the folk were sung out, the night hushed. Even the crickets, whippoorwills, and hoot owls quieted. Slaves made their way back to their cabins, and long into the night you could hear the *keening*, weeping sounds of those who knew they'd never set eyes on their loved ones again.

Minty's own family still sorrowed. She had ten brothers and sisters, but just before harvest last year, two of Minty's sisters were sold South. Never would the young girl forget the picture of her sisters, chained by neck and leg shackles to a *coffle*—a chain gang of slaves—gathered from other plantations. The slave driver kept snapping his rawhide whip toward the *coffle* so that none of the slaves dared linger. Tears silently streaked her sisters' dusty faces.

Minty sat atop a fence post and watched them until she could no longer even see the dust from their trail. She continued her vigil for hours longer, squinting into the sun. Her stomach ached for days afterward. At night she listened to her mother rock back and forth on the floor, crying and praying, "How long, O Lord? How long?"

Annie was too old to be sold. She was too old to work the fields, either, so Master set her to tending the children in the Quarter. Minty helped Annie by tending and feeding the little ones. After the children finished scooping up the last of the mush, Minty carried the tray back to the cookhouse. She loved the happy jumble of toddlers and babies in Annie's cabin, but oh, how she hated being cooped up indoors. Whenever she was in the cabin she felt jumpy—kind of like she couldn't breathe.

Today, she took the long way 'round, circling by the fields. She lingered as she watched the field slaves move to a throbbing rhythm hummed in time with the motion of their work. Sometimes the song was a call and a response—someone would sing one line and everybody else would answer. No matter what, it sounded beautiful to Minty's ears. Sometimes she almost imagined she could feel the deep hum through the soles of her feet.

"Hey, you. You, gal."

Minty's heart began to thump in her chest. It was the overseer. He was in charge of the plantation and answered directly to Master Brodas. This swaggering man with a sweaty, beet-red face carried a long, braided leather whip. Many times Minty had seen him slash it across the backs of slaves to speed up a task. Sometimes, for no reason, he got a funny look in his eyes and the corner of his mouth twitched. The slaves knew it meant he was itching to whip someone—anyone.

"Yes, suh?" Minty looked at the ground. You didn't dare look white folk directly in the eye, else they might think you too bold.

"How old are you, gal?"

"'Bout six or seven." Minty was never quite sure, since slaves didn't mark birthdays. Someone said she'd been born in 1820 or 1821.

"Whose child are you?"

"Old Rit and Ben."

"Hmmm." He shaded his eyes from the sun with his hand as he lowered his head and looked at her for a long minute. "Well, you git, now. You hear?"

He didn't have to tell Minty twice. She turned and ran

back to the dark safety of Annie's cabin. *Old Rit'll be mighty unhappy to hear 'bout the overseer takin' notice of me. Can't do no good to come under his calculatin' eye, that's for sure.*

DAUGHTERS OF THE FAITH SERIES

The Hallelujah Lass

A STORY BASED ON THE LIFE OF
SALVATION ARMY PIONEER ELIZA SHIRLEY

Wendy Lawton

MOODY PUBLISHERS
CHICAGO

Contents

Nothing but a Girl

"Nothin' but a girl," the boy mocked in a singsong chant as he ran into the alley. Black coal dust covered his face, save for pink circles around his eyes and mouth. His empty lunch tin banged the brick building as he cut the corner. "Yer nothin' but a girl!"

Eliza turned away from him, clearly ignoring him. He'd been taunting her for most of her fifteen years.

"Eliza Shirley," Beck said as they continued on, "are you going to let him mock you that way every time we come out here to run an errand?" Eliza's friend Beck was nothing if not loyal.

"What good would it do to argue?" Eliza wished she could keep from letting the likes of Jack Sipes rattle her. With a shake of her head, she said, "I keep trying to ignore him—he's so annoying! He'll say anything to get me stirred. If I let him see me riled, he'll only grow bolder."

"Why does he tease you?"

"I don't know. Maybe it's just a habit."

Before Jack went to work in the coal pits at the Coventry Colliery, he had attended free school with Eliza. Each time the schoolmistress called Eliza to the front of the schoolroom for recitation, she could see Jack mouthing those same words from the back of the room—"nothing but a girl."

"He left school, but he still heckles me whenever he sees me on the street," Eliza said.

"I still don't see why," Beck said. "He never bothers me."

"I don't know. I never tried to be anything more than a proper girl." Eliza paused. "I confess it bothers me, though I don't know why." Eliza noticed he often seemed to be around when she had to venture into the mill district. "I'd like to know when Jack Sipes works!"

"All those boys work—and they work hard—but when they are off work, they do seem to look for trouble," Beck said.

Not that it would be hard to find—the street teemed with trouble. Hungry-looking children darted in and out of alleyways. Eliza watched one boy, with an even smaller girl in tow, lurking near the entrance of a building. He couldn't have been more than six or seven years old and wore clothes so tattered the *rag picker* would've discarded them. Eliza watched him cup his hand to beg a *farthing* or two off a merchant dressed in ruffles and tight *breeches*. She flinched as the man cuffed the boy out of the way and was dismayed when, without even looking to see where the child landed, the man pulled out a handkerchief to wipe the back of his hand where it came into contact with the boy.

"We shouldn't dawdle in this part of town." Eliza shud-

dered. She linked her arm through Beck's and pulled her along, as if to hurry her out of the rough streets.

Eliza couldn't avoid these streets. There was no way to get to the mill without traveling through the squalor of the mill district when she carried a message to her father at work.

Out of the corner of her eye, she caught movement before she heard noise. Three grimy boys ran past the girls, chasing an old dog. They'd tied pieces of tin to the dog's tail. The jangle of the tin against the cobbles, the whimpers of the frightened dog, and the taunts of the boys added to the racket of the street.

"Stop!" Eliza yelled at the trio as she picked up her skirts and *crinolines* and ran after the boys. She nearly slipped in a slimy puddle that must have come from a *slops bucket* emptied out the window. *Yuck!* The thought of the foul mess soaking her hem nearly made her retch, but she forced herself to put it out of her mind and keep going. She managed to catch the shirttail of the littlest boy.

"What are you doing?" she demanded.

"What's it to ya?"

"You were being cruel to that dog."

"He don't belong to no one." The boy wriggled out of her grasp. "'Sides, you can't tell me what to do." He jerked out of her grip and darted off.

Beck caught up with Eliza just as she tried to decide whether to give chase again.

"It's a lost cause, Lizzie," Beck said.

"I know, but I hate to see an old dog terrified." She looked down at the stain wicking higher on her hem. She needed to get home and change clothes. What was wrong with her? She had jumped into the fray to help an old dog

while a few minutes before she ignored a man striking a hungry child.

"Those boys'll tire of it soon, and you needn't worry," Beck said, as they continued toward home. "A tinker will gratefully untie the dog to salvage those pieces of tin." She lifted her skirts, sidestepping an oily pile of fur. The decaying rodentlike smell implied a dead rat.

"Don't even tell me what that was." Eliza looked the other way, willing her stomach to unclench.

"Doesn't it seem like the mill workers and *colliers* get worse and worse?" Beck observed. "Their children as well. More profane and somehow bolder, and yet . . ."

"And yet?" Eliza waited for Beck to finish.

"And yet I sense a change coming—almost like a breeze blowing through."

"A change? What kind of change?" Eliza looked around at the confusion and couldn't see anything different.

"I wish I knew. I just feel as if we are on a cusp—standing at a turning point."

"Oh, Beck, you and your notions." Eliza laughed, but she knew her friend. Beck paid attention to things and, more often than not, her notions were spot on.

Eliza had grown up in Coventry, but there were many parts of the city she dared not enter alone. The swearing, drinking, gambling—and probably much worse—took place right on the streets and in the alleys. Wagons still rolled down the middle of the lanes, but the horses flinched and sidestepped with the confusion of zigzagging street urchins and hungry dogs. Eliza always felt skittish herself when in this part of town.

As they drew closer to home, the streets grew noticeably cleaner, and the evening sounds of carriages and *costermongers* replaced barking dogs and drunken brawls.

"Beck, do you ever wonder what life would have been like if we had to go to work in the mill instead of finishing our studies?"

"We are fortunate indeed. My da tells me about mothers trying to get their kids on at the mill when they are seven or eight years old. They lie about their ages." Beck's father worked at the mill where Eliza's father was foreman.

Eliza shook her head and made a clicking noise with her tongue. "They're not supposed to start them until they are at least nine." She thought of those boys torturing the old dog and wondered if the streets were any better for them than the mill.

"Da says they hate to turn away the little children coming in for work. If they don't work, they may not get anything to eat."

"But they need to get a year or two of school in first."

"Indeed, they ought to be in school, but if they're not taken on at the mill, they'll likely end up in the coal pits." Beck sighed. "I'm not telling you anything you don't already know. Your father must see the same thing."

"Papa doesn't talk about it." And Eliza tried not to dwell on it. "He doesn't like to burden mother and me."

Beck didn't say anything, and they walked silently for a while.

Eliza reached out to run her hand along the iron railing on a fence. She loved feeling the bump, bump, bump against her gloved fingers. "One time Papa gave me an especially

pretty *jacquard* ribbon. When I commented on the pattern, he shrugged it off as if the ribbon vexed him. Said that the company claims to make silk ribbons of 'unsurpassed beauty,' but he couldn't see past the ugliness that went into the making."

"I know," Beck said, nodding. "The youngest children start as scavengers." Beck looked at Eliza in that piercing way. "Lizzie, the machinery is still running while they crawl around under it. If a child's hair should get caught . . ."

Though they had been best friends for years, Beck—whose real name was Elizabeth Pearson—still surprised Eliza. At fourteen, Beck was a full year younger than Eliza, but she was much more knowing. She was strong and blunt and took pride in meeting things head-on.

How different they were. Eliza didn't mind not knowing. In fact, she preferred not knowing about ugly things. Eliza looked at Beck's strong hands and heard the timbre in her voice. She looked down at her own undersized, fluttery hands gloved in pale kid leather. Somehow Jack's words crept back, *nothing but a girl*.

Being an only child, she knew her parents *cosseted* her. It never bothered Eliza one bit. She longed to live amid beauty and calm. She wasn't alone. All of gentle English society in 1878, under the example of proper Queen Victoria, worked hard at embracing beauty and calm.

"Do we have to keep talking about this?" Eliza hated the whine she heard in her voice. She ran her hands down her skirt, smoothing the fabric.

"No." Beck let her shoulders droop. "Besides, I can always tell when you become upset. You smooth your skirts until they're practically plastered against your legs."

Eliza plumped her skirts out, arranged her *reticule* on her wrist, and clasped her hands together. "I *do* care. It's just that I have a bold imagination coupled with a delicate stomach. I want to care without hearing details."

"Don't worry, Lizzie. I'm just as bad. I may talk about it, but I do precious little to change things," Beck said. "After all, 'twasn't I who went chasing like a *hoyden* after a ragtag bunch of *guttersnipes*."

Eliza blushed. "Speaking of changing things, I have a new *chipstraw* bonnet, and Papa brought home a long *tartan grosgrain* ribbon. Want to have tea and help me trim my new bonnet?"

Beck laughed. "And tell me again why it bothers you to have Jack accuse you of being a girl?"

Eliza pinched Beck. "There's nothing wrong with being a girl. I've worked very hard to learn to be a proper girl."

Beck rolled her eyes. "What, pray tell, is a proper girl?"

"Elizabeth Pearson!" Eliza stopped abruptly and turned to face her friend, causing Beck to bump into her. "With all the hours we've spent reading *The Habits of Good Society* and all the years we've spent practicing the art of proper address, modesty, and womanly arts—how can you even jest?"

Beck just laughed, grabbed Eliza's arm, and pulled her along.

Later that evening when Eliza put the hat trimmings back into the *linen press*, she lifted out the tiny beribboned cap Mum had made for her christening. She fingered its softness.

She had long heard the story of her birth—how her parents and grandparents were delighted at long last to welcome a baby girl. Mum and Papa often said that, though they came from good church-going families, it was not until Eliza was a toddler that they knelt at the altar to commit themselves and their family to God. Since that day, they did not hold with a Sunday-only faith. Eliza's mother always liked to say that she had a fiery religion. "I was born in the fire and cannot live in the smoke."

Papa and Mum doted on Eliza. When her father became a part-time preacher, the congregation loved her as well—definitely a nice way to grow up. While the Shirleys were not wealthy, food was always plentiful and their home comfortable. In truth, Eliza could not recall ever doing without something she wanted.

She had few clear memories of those early years, but she did remember gathering up the silk skirts on her Sunday dress and sitting gingerly on the edge of the rough pew. She always tried to be careful not to crease the intricate drape of her skirt or the tiny pleats around the hem. As Papa began his sermon, she hooked and unhooked the ankle button boots that matched her dress. She learned to do it with nimble, patient fingers instead of the usual buttonhook. Her father laughed when he saw unbuttoned shoes after church—always pretending to believe she couldn't have done it herself. He'd turn to Mum and say, "Annie, she's too little. Somebody must have crawled under the pew and unbuttoned Lizzie's shoes."

Eliza still remembered standing in the *narthex* with her hands on her hips, nearly stomping her foot out of an unbuttoned boot as she replied, "I do it. Lizzie big."

Eliza loved pretty things. Some of her first memories were color and smell memories—like the scent of the moss rose climbing over the stone wall in the garden and the colors of the silk floss in her mother's needlework basket. The feel of things mattered to her as well—smooth fabrics against her skin; starched petticoats; crisp ringlets bump-bumping against her ear. Her mother understood. Mum used to roll her eyes in pretend frustration and say, "It's a good thing Eliza is an only child since those ringlets take two curling irons and the hottest of fires."

Despite her delight in finery, Eliza's clearest memory centered on her father's sermons. Even before she could read, she learned that the way to keep attentive during the long hour was to try to memorize the whole thing. She worked hard to remember the words, repeating them over and over when her father paused.

Parishioners often remarked to her father about Eliza's "proper *comportment*" during service. It was sheer concentration, not manners. As she got older, she tried to figure out the bones of his sermon; for as soon as she uncovered the structure, it was much easier to put the parts together. Her parents were amazed at her ability to memorize whole sermons and then mimic her father's delivery. To this day, she could still repeat many of his sermons.

She'd never forget the time, at the age of twelve, when she walked down the aisle of her father's church in response to a particularly inspiring sermon. As she fell to her knees, she repeated—word for word—some of the stirring phrases from Papa's sermon. Her mother cried and, afterward, Beck kept hugging Eliza, practically crushing her skirts. She loved it.

"Oh, Lizzie. I've been praying for you for the longest time," Beck said. "Now you're saved." Beck's strong faith and bold way of stating things always made Eliza feel a little uncomfortable.

"It was an effective message, was it not?"

Beck looked confused. "I'm talking about your profession of faith, not your father's sermon."

"Yes, well . . . I'm going to work hard to live up to my father's challenge."

Beck didn't answer.

Nearly a year afterward, while walking home from school, Beck asked her friend about that day. Eliza just laughed in a playful way. "I tried getting forgiveness for sin and following Jesus, but it just didn't work out quite right." She shrugged her shoulders. "I'll just keep working out my salvation as I go—one little piece at a time."

"Work it out?"

"A little bit at a time." Eliza laughed and poked a teasing finger at her friend. "Truth be told, coming before God and confessing sinfulness takes more boldness than a gently bred girl can muster."

Beck said little as they continued their walk to school.

Those memories seemed long past. Now that Eliza was fifteen, she had finished with her studies. Her job was to learn the womanly arts—things like sewing, cooking, mending, cleaning, making soap and candles, and mastering fancy needlework. She also helped her mother call on the church

members and take baskets to the sick and aged. For the most part she loved it and worked hard to please her mother.

The most fun, however, came when Beck called for a visit.

"Lizzie, come out to the garden. Let's talk."

Eliza took a basket of socks that needed darning. It was cool in early March, but buds could be seen swelling on many of the branches. She looked at the tangle of vines along the garden wall. In early summer they'd be covered with roses, but on this chilly day she found it hard to believe those dry vines held the promise of such fragrant treasure. For now, the smell of wood chimney fires hung over the garden.

"Are you out paying calls, Beck?"

"Indeed not. That sounds so grown-up." Beck poked her. "But I guess we're far too old to say I came to play."

"Play sounds nice. Sometimes I think I'll be cooking and cleaning the rest of my life."

"I thought you loved those things!"

Eliza pulled a holey sock over the smooth wooden darning egg. "I do. Truly." She jabbed the needle into the sock.

"Well, it's a fact that we'll do our share of cooking and cleaning during our lifetimes, but sometimes I pray, asking God for more—for a bigger assignment."

"Beck!" Sometimes her friend said things that shocked Eliza.

Beck leaned in closer as she changed the subject, "Remember when I told you I sensed a change in the air?"

"I remember the day, though I don't remember what made you say that."

"Just a feeling," Beck said. "Anyway, I just came back from taking dinner to my father at the mill."

"You went alone?"

"Lizzie, I am not afraid." Beck spoke those words as if speaking to a not-so-bright child. "I'm a big girl—strong—with a loud voice and fast feet. I'm not about to let a few ruffians keep me from doing what I need to do."

Eliza laughed. "I guess they wouldn't want to tangle with you after all."

"As I walked through the streets, I sensed something on the wind—more than ever." Beck stopped as if thinking.

"What?" Eliza dropped her sock into the basket and set it on the bench. "Don't stop now—you've got my curiosity stirred."

"I wish I knew. I saw genteel women dressed in black talking to the roughest of characters twice today. I wanted to find out what they were about, but I wasn't fast enough."

"Strange indeed."

"I know." Beck sounded perplexed. "If this weren't jolly old England, I'd almost suspect a revolution about to happen."

"Goodness, Beck. You're letting your imagination run wild."

"No, Lizzie. I know it's not a revolution but it is *something*." She shook her head as if trying to shake out the cobwebs. "Without a doubt, it is *something*."

DAUGHTERS OF THE FAITH SERIES

Ransom's Mark

A STORY BASED ON THE LIFE
OF THE PIONEER OLIVE OATMAN

Wendy Lawton

MOODY PUBLISHERS
CHICAGO

Contents

Seeing the Elephant

Olive!"

The sun was barely up. Why was Lucy shaking her? And what was the commotion outdoors? Olive remembered waking to barking dogs during the night, but before she could work out what was happening, it was morning and her sister Lucy was dragging off the coverlet.

"Get up. Get dressed. Help Mary Ann get ready. And then get Charity Ann dressed. We have company."

"Company?" Olive stretched, reaching her arms way above her head and extending her toes as far as they'd point. How could they have company this early? Their cabin stood on an isolated Illinois homestead a full five miles outside Fulton. It wasn't on the way to anything.

"Yes, you *lay-abed,* we have company," Lucy said, excitement tingeing her words. "The Wheelers and the Pounds stopped late last night on their way from New York to the West." Lucy gave Olive one final shake before leaving. "You

must get up. I need to help Ma and the ladies prepare breakfast. Lorenzo is chopping wood, and Royce is helping him."

Olive threw off the coverlet and sat on the side of her bed, lifting the edge of the curtain and peeking out the window. The yard teemed with activity. Two canvas-covered wagons had pulled in the yard during the night. It looked like a regular frolic with children running, dogs barking, and Pa standing by the wagons talking with two men.

Had they brought those wagons all the way from East Bloomfield? New York seemed so far away, almost like another country. Olive remembered that her mother and father had been married in East Bloomfield.

Once, when Pa and Lorenzo were away, Ma told the girls all about her wedding in the old East Bloomfield Congregational Church. She had carefully lifted her *watered silk* wedding dress out of the chest. As Ma told them all about the day, she let Lucy, Olive, and Mary Ann unfold the gown, showing them the puffy *gigot sleeves* and the heavily weighted skirt. She unrolled her *Mary Stuart cap* and the delicate lace *ruff* from the linen in which they were lightly rolled. The lace was so fine it looked like cobwebs. Ma confided that she had waited to marry until the very end of April in the hope that the lilacs would force a bloom. The wedding supper had been at the home of the Wheelers.

Why, it must be the same Wheelers who were whooping it up in their yard!

Olive woke her little sister, Mary Ann. Putting a finger over her lips, Olive pointed Mary Ann toward the outhouse. Normally the girls would have taken care of their entire *toilette* in their room, but Olive didn't relish having to clean the

slops bucket while company visited. The girls managed to slip back inside before anyone saw them.

Olive poured water from the pitcher into the basin. She washed, wrung the cloth out, and repeated the procedure, helping Mary Ann wash up.

"Do we wear our Sunday dresses, Olive?" Mary Ann loved her new Sunday dress.

"No. I think we have work to do. Let's wear our next-to-best dresses." She put a *pinafore* over Mary Ann's and an apron over her own. "Can you tidy up the room while I take care of Charity Ann?"

"Oh dear, I can't empty the basin." Of late, the words "oh dear" had peppered much of Mary Ann's conversation. She overheard a neighbor use the phrase and had enthusiastically adopted it.

"We'll leave it for now." In a large family, they'd long ago learned to pitch in and help each other out. They'd also learned that taking care of people came first and chores must sometimes go by the wayside.

Olive readied three-year-old Charity Ann for the day. She would follow Olive the rest of the day.

"Olive Ann." Ma followed her out onto the doorstep, setting the white glazed stoneware crock on the step along with her pair of pruning shears. "Fill this crock with lilacs, will you? When you are finished, put it on the table that Lucy and Lorenzo are setting up under the oak."

Lucy and Lorenzo had laid a pair of wide boards across two sawhorses, and Lucy was smoothing one of Ma's best Belgian linen tablecloths over the makeshift table. Some of the other young people carried dishes and utensils to the table.

Olive hurried to cut an armful of lilacs. Ma's lilac bush scented the entire yard, and, despite the early hour, Olive had to gently brush bees away as she cut. They started work early when lilac nectar scented the air. She remembered to scrape the blade along the woody stems before putting them into the crock so the lilacs could soak water deep into the marrow of their flesh. When she couldn't squeeze another stem into the crock, she carried the lilacs to the center of the table and went to fetch water to fill the crock.

"Why, Mary Ann Sperry!" One of the women carrying out a platter of flapjacks stopped short of the table. "I mean . . . Mrs. Oatman." The woman blushed to have resorted to Ma's maiden name.

"Whatever is wrong, Mrs. Wheeler?" Ma looked concerned.

"Nothing is wrong, but, I declare, if that doesn't look like the exact same crock of lilacs you used to set on your table in New York."

"It's most nearly the same," Ma said with a laugh, putting small pitchers of syrup on the table. "The crock is the salt-glazed one your folks gave me as a wedding gift, and that lilac bush was started from a slip off a slip off a slip of my grandmother's bush from the Berkshires."

"Well, I'll be . . ." Mrs. Wheeler said. "How did you manage that?"

"My mother started one off grandmother's bush. When Mr. Oatman and I set out to move west, Mother gave me a slip off hers. It was wrapped in moss and tied with linen. I kept it moistened during the whole journey. By the time we reached

LaHarpe, it was already well rooted. I left the moss and the linen around the root ball and set it into the ground."

Olive couldn't help seeing the sadness around Ma's eyes when she spoke of LaHarpe. Many a dream had died there.

"How did you move the bush from LaHarpe way out here to the country?"

"We didn't move the bush. In fact, we've left a lilac bush at every place we've alighted on this journey."

Ma motioned for the men to come sit down with the ladies. Lucy and Olive shooed all the children into the house to eat around the big kitchen table. After they got plates filled and little ones settled, they took food out to the big boys, sitting near the back door. Between mouthfuls, they replenished the platter of flapjacks on the adult table.

Ma flashed them a grateful look. They could see weariness in the set of her shoulders. Any day now she was expecting the seventh Oatman child.

"So, when you left LaHarpe, where did you go?" Mrs. Wheeler was intent on catching up with all the years she'd missed.

"You do know we lost our *mercantile* in the depression of 1842, don't you?" Pa spoke quietly but seemed relieved to get the words out.

"Why, no, Royce, we did not know." Mr. Wheeler seemed uncomfortable and gave a look to his wife that seemed to fault her for prying.

"Too many folk lost everything," Mr. Pound said. He quietly folded his napkin. "You must be right proud to have built up another farm and taken such good care of your family."

Pa seemed to relax. "Thank you for that. It hasn't been

easy. When we lost the store, we first went back to Pennsylvania to be near relations. The only things we took with us were our household belongings."

"And a slip off my lilac bush," Ma said smiling. "Does anyone care for more coffee?" She looked toward Lucy who carried the big *graniteware* pot steaming with freshly brewed coffee.

Olive began clearing plates as Lucy poured and the adults visited.

"We didn't stay long in Pennsylvania," Pa said. "The wide open spaces of the West had already settled in our blood, and it was too late to be satisfied back in the East."

"And you two coming from such established Yankee stock?" Mrs. Pound pretended to be shocked. "Mrs. Oatman, don't I recall that your Sperry kin settled in Connecticut just a few years after the Mayflower landed?"

Ma laughed. "You don't think those fine Yankees ventured all the way from England to land on these shores because they were content to stay at home, do you?"

Olive could see Pa squeeze Ma's hand under the table.

"Mrs. Oatman is right," Pa said. "We both have a touch of *wanderlust* in us. We left Pennsylvania and made the trip out West again. I had to teach school in Chicago for a time to save enough to homestead a piece of land and start all over. We finally ended up here in Fulton."

Ma touched the lilacs on the table. "I went over to our old place in LaHarpe and snipped a piece of the Sperry lilac. When it sprouted, I knew we were home again."

"We met your children last night," Pa said. "Let us introduce you to our family." He signaled to the children to come.

Charity Ann was already following Olive again. "This is our eldest daughter, Lucy. She is 16 now and a great help to her mother."

Lucy gave a proper curtsy.

"This is Lorenzo, he's 14; Olive Ann is 12; Royce here is 9; Mary Ann is 6; and Charity Ann is 3."

No one mentioned the soon-to-be-expected baby since a person never mentioned such things in polite society. It was one of those things one pretended not to notice.

The younger children ran off to play.

Olive hovered nearby to offer coffee or to clear things off the table. Charity Ann dogged her every step.

As Olive poured coffee into Mrs. Wheeler's cup, the woman turned to Ma and said, "I declare, Mrs. Oatman, if I didn't know Olive was your daughter, I'd say I was looking at you twenty years ago."

"Yes," agreed Mrs. Pound. She turned to Olive. "Did you know your mama was reckoned to be the beauty of Ontario County?"

The comment made both Ma and Olive blush.

"Olive has her father's shiny dark hair, but those intense eyes and fine features are pure Sperry." Mrs. Wheeler seemed not to notice Olive's discomfort at being singled out. "And how ever does she keep that lovely fair skin living out here on the prairie?"

Lucy was the one most people accounted a beauty because she had Pa's round face and Ma's light-colored hair. Mary Ann favored the Oatman side as well, though she was of a frailer build. Little C. A. was simply a cherub of a girl, as Olive always liked to say. And the boys? Well . . . they were

boys. Olive thought Lorenzo a taller version of their father, serious-looking and solid. He was the one who always looked out for his sisters. You could always count on Lorenzo. Royce was a round, playful, rosy-cheeked version of his mother.

"So tell us about your journey," Pa prompted the men, anxious to change the subject.

"All we hear about in the East is the opportunity in the West," Mr. Pound said.

"Mr. Horace Greeley, the editor of the *New York Tribune*, has been hammering us with editorial after editorial. Surely you've heard his famous words, even out here on the prairie . . ." Mr. Wheeler put a serious look on his face, puffed out his chest and said, "Go west, young man. Go west."

"Yes, and we've not only read his words, we've seen wagon load after wagon load heeding the call." Pa stood up to stretch his legs. "Where will you go?"

"We are going to take the Oregon Trail," Mr. Pound said. "At least that's the plan. We will head for Council Bluffs. That's where we'll rendezvous, purchase all our supplies, and join up with a wagon train."

Ma and the ladies stood up and shook out their skirts. They picked up the last of the dishes and went into the house to begin planning dinner. Since there were no children her age, Olive stayed close to the table so she could hear the talk of the West. The men talked about word of a gold rush in California and land to be had for the taking. They discussed the different routes and the best time of the year to start.

Olive watched her father as he listened to his friends. They pored over Mr. Wheeler's copy of *The Emigrant's Guide to California*. They walked over to the wagons, and she could

see Pa running appreciative hands along the canvas stretched over the ribs and squatting down to look at the strength of the axles. By the time the women had dinner prepared in the early afternoon, Olive saw a yearning in her father's face.

During dinner, the men continued to talk about the journey west. The children ate and cleared away the dishes, and still the adults talked.

"Do you fear going?" Ma asked later, as the women and the girls worked to bake enough loaves of bread to hold them until they reached Council Bluffs.

"Sometimes," admitted Mrs. Wheeler. "But look at them." She pointed to the men. "Once they make up their minds to see the elephant, there is no stopping them."

"See the elephant?" Ma asked.

"It's a figure of speech. Remember when we were children and the circus came to town? We couldn't think about anything else until we had been able to see the elephant." Mrs. Wheeler sighed as she looked out the door at the three men earnestly examining the wagon wheels.

"You asked about fear, Mary Ann." Mrs. Pound lowered her voice and lapsed back into girlhood names. "The term 'to see the elephant' actually comes from a story of a farmer who came to town with his whole crop of vegetables in his wagon. He arrived just in time to see the circus parade being led by the elephant." She gave the bread dough a hearty thump on the floured board. "He was thrilled to see the parade, but his horses startled and bolted, overturning his wagon and spilling his entire load of vegetables into the ditch." She continued to knead as she talked. "When the townspeople expressed their

regrets for his loss, he just slapped his thigh and said, 'I don't give a hang, for I have seen the elephant.'"

"Isn't that the truth," said Mrs. Wheeler. "Once a man's got a hankering to see the elephant, the cost doesn't seem to matter."

That night, they ate a supper of wild strawberries, crusty baked bread with newly churned butter, and glasses of cool milk. The grownups talked long into the night. The children continued to run and play in the dark, trying to trap fireflies and listening to the far-off sounds of wolves. Nobody stirred to put the children to bed—they sort of drifted off and fell asleep on one bed or another, hoping someone would eventually tuck them into the proper bed.

Early in the morning, before the sun had barely risen, the Pounds and the Wheelers packed the last of their things into the wagons and headed out of the Oatman yard. Children walked alongside the wagons, careful to stay to the side since the horses tied onto the back kicked up a lot of dust. The Oatmans walked alongside for a ways, calling out good-byes as they walked.

When Ma could no longer keep up, she called out, "God be with you, dear friends." When Ma said it, she meant it. She believed God walked with them every step of the way.

As the wagons pulled away, the Oatmans continued waving until all they could see was a cloud of dust on the horizon. Olive heard her mother sigh deeply and understood the reason—her father stood there staring after the wagons with a look of stark longing. At that moment, Olive knew the truth—Pa would not be satisfied until he saw the elephant for himself.

2
Wagons Ho

Olive." Ma held out a piece of linen and a spongy clump of moss. "Cut about a six-inch stem off my lilac. Choose the healthiest branch near the tip. Soak the moss, and then use the linen to tie the damp moss around the cutting."

Ma went back inside to finish scrubbing every inch of their house. Olive couldn't understand what drove her mother to clean a house that would probably stay empty until dusty cobwebs festooned each rafter. When she asked, Ma simply looked at her in that way that said, "I don't wish to discuss this any further."

While Ma silently scrubbed, Pa hopped from one detail to the next—checking and oiling harnesses; running his hands over the legs of the horses; and checking his lists of provisions, farming implements, and bags of seeds.

Ever since the day spent with their Oregon-bound friends a year ago, Pa had seemed restless. At first Ma had been busy with the newest Oatman, an ever-hungry little boy, but, before

long, Olive noticed that she became quiet and pensive when Pa complained about Illinois weather or the creep of civilization toward their homestead.

Four years ago, during their second year of farming at Fulton, Pa injured his back moving a boulder while helping a neighbor dig a well. The injury had bothered him ever since, especially in the extreme cold of winter. Sometimes when his back pained him it made his knee and the side of his foot tingle and become numb. Over the last four years, he'd worked around it, resting when the injury became inflamed and doubling up on the work when it subsided.

Last year, however, all Pa could talk about was how much the intense cold affected him.

"Mary Ann," Pa whispered. "Are you awake?"

Olive sometimes heard her parents talking long into the night.

"I fear that if I am to somehow live long enough to educate my family or even to enjoy tolerable health, we must make a move." When Ma didn't answer, he went on. "I need to seek a climate free from the extreme changes of weather."

Olive strained to hear Ma's answer.

After a long silence, Ma asked, "Does this have anything to do with all those strange pamphlets you've been discussing with Mr. Thompson and others about a colony—a promised land—near the Colorado River?"

"I don't know about 'strange.'" Father cleared his throat. Olive recognized the gesture as the one her father always made before launching into a lecture or an argument. "I don't agree with all the beliefs of the man calling for this journey, but I do believe the destination to be a Promised Land—filled

with tall grasses, abundant water, rich soil, and warm climate."

"I've never stood against you before, Royce, and I won't do so now. You've provided well for us over the years. The job God gave me is to follow your lead and care for this family." Ma laughed a quiet laugh. "Besides, for as long as I've known you, you seem to have an incurable tugging westward. I might as well be prepared to follow you to the edge of the Pacific Ocean and get it over with."

So that was that.

Pa began planning. Olive had never seen him so happy. When he finally sold everything, he announced that they had fifteen hundred dollars to outfit themselves for the journey and to make a new start near the Rio Colorado in California.

They purchased near home most of the things they needed for the journey. Pa knew that if he waited until they arrived in Independence, prices would triple. He bought a sturdy Studebaker wagon—the kind that pioneers called prairie schooners. A canvas bonnet covered the curved ribs of strong oak. The heavy bed of the wagon was tarred to make it watertight so that it could float down a gentle stream if needed. The sideboards were beveled outward so that rainwater couldn't seep in between the bonnet and the bed.

A jockey box attached to the side of the wagon. Pa kept checking and rechecking to make sure he included everything they might need inside the box. It carried extra iron bolts, *linch pins, skeins,* nails, *hoop iron,* a variety of tools, and a jack. Also slung on the side of the wagon were two water barrels, a butter churn, a shovel and axe, a tar bucket, a feed trough for the livestock, and a chicken coop.

Ma packed the interior. She used every inch of space to bring as many of the family treasures as she could without weighing down the wagon. They needed clothing and yardage goods to make more. She had to include all the cooking utensils needed to make meals along the trail, as well as the tools she'd need to set up housekeeping in California.

She tried to pack and discard without becoming sentimental, but it was impossible. In the end, her family linens, the salt crock, her wedding dress, and all the family books were tucked into crevices in the wagon.

One of the last things to go into the wagon was the lilac cutting Olive had carefully prepared. Ma wanted it where she could keep it moist, so she placed the rooting end in a small oilcloth sack tied round with twine and set on the shelf near her Bible. She had also made an oilcloth sack for her Bible in case they took a drenching.

All the rest of the space held food supplies, farming implements, and bedding. Down the center of the wagon, Ma arranged a bed of sorts. She and the little ones would sleep in that nest, along with Lucy and Olive at times. It would be a tumble of bodies in a cramped space, but it provided safety and warmth.

Once they reached Independence, Pa hoped to buy a couple of small army surplus tents for extra sleeping. Until then, he, Lorenzo, and Royce planned to unroll their bedding under the box of the wagon.

They had a team of six oxen to pull the wagon and tied their two horses and a milk cow behind. As far as humanly possible, they were ready for the adventure ahead.

Pa took the Bible out of the oilcloth and opened it. "This passage comes from the thirty-third chapter of the book of Genesis." He looked down at the page and read, "And he said, Let us take our journey, and let us go, and I will go before thee." He closed the Bible and led them in prayer, asking God to walk alongside them on the journey.

The wagon rolled out of the Fulton homestead toward Davenport, Iowa, where they planned to meet up with their Illinois neighbors, the Thompsons, for the journey to Independence, Missouri—the jumping-off place to the West.

Independence teemed with activity. To Olive it seemed as if the whole country was headed west. It looked like the encampment of a vast army on wheels.

So many *emigrant* wagon train companies met up and pulled out of the town that the wagons either sank into dusty soil halfway to the axle in dry weather or got stuck in the thick clay mud they called "gumbo" after a rain.

The fields around the city had been stripped to bare dirt by hundreds of thousands of grazing cattle funneling through Independence. With thousands of campfires, not a twig of firewood survived in the entire region—every downed tree or broken branch became a treasure.

The Brewster Party—the one Pa had decided to join—agreed to meet four miles south of town. When all assembled, there were twenty wagons and fifty-two people in the party, most of them children. That suited Olive just fine. She hoped

to find a girl her age, since Lucy's best friend, Susan Thompson from Fulton, traveled in the same party.

Olive met boys and babies, toddlers and little girls, but apparently she was the only 13-year-old girl. How she wished Pa could wait for a different wagon train, but she knew that the careful timing of their departure was critical. Had they planned to take the Oregon Trail, the Bozeman Trail, or the California Trail, they'd be obliged to wait until spring. The mountain passes would be closed by snow long before they could arrive. But, because they chose the southern route—the Santa Fe Trail to the Gila Trail—cold weather would not be as much a problem as heat and drought could be in the southern deserts.

"Want to walk over to that ridge with Susan and me?" Lucy asked.

Olive couldn't believe they would ask. She looked over toward Ma, nursing the baby. C. A. was taking a nap, and Royce and Mary Ann were playing with the other children. A moment before she had felt lonely—now she felt like skipping across the prairie.

"Yes. Let me get my bonnet." She ran to the wagon. Ma smiled with a quick wink of her eye. She understood the reason for Olive's sudden excitement.

Maybe this trip would be an adventure after all.

The girls walked to the ridge and found an outcropping of stone on which to sit.

"My pa says to enjoy these ridges and rock outcroppings while we have them," Susan said. "At times, the land will be so flat we'll not find a single spot offering privacy."

Olive knew what she meant by privacy. There would be

no outhouses along wilderness trails. It was not just grooming privacy that they craved. Because of the time they'd already spent on the road from Davenport, Olive knew how important it could be to put a little space between you and a whole wagon train of people.

"Don't fret." Lucy laughed. "My mother already thought of that. She brought old blankets to tie between two trees to offer some little privacy on the plains."

Olive should have known Ma would think of a plan.

"And if there are no trees or scrub brushes tall enough," Lucy continued, "we'll tie our makeshift curtain between two wagons."

The girls giggled at the thought of some of the inconveniences they'd experience before they reached the Rio Colorado.

Susan changed the subject abruptly. "My cousin said that nothing makes hair softer and shinier than washing it in a cold running stream." Susan lowered her voice to a whisper. "And she said that if we find elderberries, we can crush them and stain our lips reddish."

Before Olive could say anything, both girls started laughing, and Olive realized Susan was teasing. Sort of. *Surely she wouldn't think of using face paint, would she?*

"Don't look so worried, sister," said Lucy. "Susan loves to talk nonsense."

The afternoon passed with light talk and laughter. They went back to the camp to spell their mothers with the little ones and to help prepare the meal. The first couple of nights they prepared a large communal meal for the whole *emigrant* party, but they soon settled into their trail routine of separating into family groups for meals.

That night, August 9, 1850, everyone gathered after supper to set regulations for the long trip west and to get acquainted with each other. Besides Mr. Brewster, who organized the party, the party consisted of Susan's family (the Thompsons), the Lane family, the Kelly family, the Wilders, the Metteers, the Brinshalls, the Oatmans, and others.

After the formalities concluded, Susan took out her violin to play. She started with "Money Musk" and "Zipp Coon." The dogs barked, the oxen stepped nervously, the children hopped, and some of the men grabbed their partners to dance. As the night wore on and the breeze picked up dust off the prairie and swirled around the revelers, Susan ended by playing "The Old Oaken Bucket." Every voice joined in singing the words:

How dear to my heart are the scenes of my childhood
When fond recollection presents them to view,
The orchard, the meadow, the deep tangled wildwood,
And ev'ry loved spot which my infancy knew—
The wide spreading pond, and the mill that stood by it,
The bridge and the rock where the cataract fell;
The cot of my father, the dairy house nigh it,
And e'en the rude bucket that hung in the well.
The old oaken bucket, the iron bound bucket,
The moss covered bucket that hung in the well.

Olive glanced at her mother to see the glisten of tears reflecting the moonlight. Ma pulled a handkerchief out of her apron pocket. Looking around the circle, it was apparent she was not alone.

The moss covered bucket I hailed as a treasure,
For often at noon, when returned from the field,
I found it the source of an exquisite pleasure,
The purest and sweetest that nature can yield.
How ardent I seized it, with hands that were glowing,
And quick to the white pebbled bottom it fell
Then soon, with the emblem of truth overflowing,
And dripping with coolness, it rose from the well.
The old oaken bucket, the iron bound bucket,
The moss covered bucket that hung in the well.

Susan put her violin away as someone led in prayer for a safe journey ahead. Families gathered sleepy children and headed off toward their wagons for the night.

Sleep was a long time in coming for Olive. She tried to be still, listening to the melody of the night—sounds of lowing cattle, soft nickers of horses, the far-off howl of the coyote, a chorus of sputters and snores, and the muffled weeping of a homesick pioneer. Eventually she must have fallen asleep, wedged tightly between Lucy and Mary Ann.

After morning prayers, Pa and Lorenzo hitched the oxen to the wagon as Ma and the girls finished cooking the food that must take them through the day. They wouldn't halt until suppertime. Olive hoped the tasks of getting underway would eventually become routine, but for now, they had to remember each step. Ma would handle the reins, if needed, and either Lucy or Olive would take turns inside the wagon caring for

the baby and C. A. while the other walked. Mary Ann and Royce could walk alongside, play with their friends, or ride if they became tired.

When they first began to talk about the trip all those months ago, Olive figured the family would ride comfortably in the wagon from Fulton to California, just as they did in Illinois when they rode to church. She laughed now when she compared her expectation to reality.

The wagon weighed some 1,300 pounds empty. With all their belongings, supplies, and foodstuffs added, the prairie schooner lumbered along at a snail's pace. Most *emigrant* parties covered only about fifteen miles a day. Even when walking alongside, the pace seemed too slow. Children would spend the whole day running up ahead and running back to check on the wagon. The men of the party often rode on horseback, riding far ahead to scout the trail and coming back to check on the progress of the train. Olive guessed that much of the "scouting" took place because the men *chaffed* at the plodding pace.

Riding in the wagon bounced and jostled the passengers until they were bruised and sore. None of the axles on the Oatman covered wagon had springs—the only springs on the whole wagon were those under the driver's seat. The rutted dirt roads of the trail were regular washboards. Sometimes Olive thought her teeth would rattle out of her gums.

They hadn't been long on the road to Davenport when they found a purpose for the bumps and jumps. Ma discovered they could fill the butter churn with fresh milk in the morning, and, by night, they only had to pour off the buttermilk and they scraped out a lump of sweet yellow butter, ready for supper without any further churning.

And many a mother claimed that the jostling of the wagon cured a colicky baby. Olive knew it had the opposite effect on her—riding inside made her downright cranky.

But none of that mattered. It was August 10th and at long last, they were hitched, loaded, and ready. The children stood expectantly, as James Brewster raised his horn to his lips and let out a shrill note followed by the shout, "Wagons ho!"

One by one, the heavy wagons creaked, swayed, and rocked as they pulled out of the circle, straightening into a long line to stretch across the vast prairie.

Unexpectedly, Olive felt her scalp tighten and chills run across her shoulders. Just a moment before the trip had held promise of great adventure. What changed? What caused a jagged shard of fear to pierce the excitement? Olive tried to shake off the eerie feeling, but it persisted as the wagons moved farther away from the safety of home.

DAUGHTERS OF THE FAITH SERIES

The Captive Princess

A STORY BASED ON THE LIFE
OF YOUNG POCAHONTAS

Wendy Lawton

MOODY PUBLISHERS
CHICAGO

Contents

Setting the Captive Free

Shouts from the edge of the forest shattered the afternoon quiet. Pocahontas and Matachanna dropped the oyster shells they'd been using to scrape a deerskin pelt. Besides shouts, Pocahontas could pick out the howls and yelps of agitated dogs, along with the chattering of a frightened animal. As she stood craning her neck to get a better view, she saw an intent knot of boys and dogs. Furtive over-the-shoulder looks from the circle of boys told Pocahontas that something was afoot.

"Maraowanchesso!" Boys could be such nuisances. She pulled her sister to her feet. "Look at those boys over there—across the footbridge by the edge of the trees."

"I see." Matachanna squinted her eyes against the bright afternoon sun. "What are they doing?"

"I wish I knew." Pocahontas crept closer. "The way those dogs bark and circle, it must have to do with hunting."

"Where are the mothers?" Matachanna asked.

"They're preparing the ground for planting—too far away to hear. We'd best go see." Pocahontas pulled off the fur mantle she wore. It kept her warm on days like today, but she couldn't move as quickly in it.

Matachanna also removed hers. She folded it and put it beside the pelt frame.

Another round of yelping punctuated by chirpy cries sent the two girls hurrying toward the creek. Pocahontas made her way across the peeled log that bridged the creek first, followed by her younger sister.

The final snowmelt had swelled the creek, but neither girl feared water. Powhatan children swam as well as they walked. The mothers threw their children into water before they could even crawl. They claimed it hardened them off and made them strong. If the babies didn't enjoy the water so much, Pocahontas doubted the mothers would still do it, toughness or not. Powhatan parents loved their children.

Being a water baby had worked for Pocahontas. She could swim against the swiftest current if need be. Matachanna swam better than many of the boys her age, but she had a long way to go before she could match strokes with Pocahontas.

Of course the girls were just as agile traversing the footbridge, so swimming in the cold waters never entered Pocahontas's mind. She had nothing but the boys and their mischief on her mind.

One of the boys spotted the girls running toward them and called out a warning to his friends. The boys turned as one, their hands behind their backs. Standing shoulder to shoulder they faced the girls. They were hiding something.

The dogs continued to circle and bark.

"Hush," the oldest boy said. One of the dogs whined and quieted, but the rest ignored him.

"It's the princess," whispered another, his eyes widening.

Pocahontas pushed forward and the wall of boys opened for her. She smiled to herself. It never hurt to be the favored daughter of the most powerful man in all the land.

When she saw what caused the chaos, a familiar tightness gripped her chest. A large *arakun* wriggled against captivity, sputtering and chattering. His masked face registered anger and pain. He worked furiously with his nimble front paws to try to free his leg from the sinew bonds of the trap.

"We caught him in our trap," the first boy said. "He's just a 'rakun but a big one. A fighter."

"We captured him and he is our prisoner," said the littlest one.

Pocahontas knew she should be used to this. Young boys were supposed to learn to hunt. By the time of their *huskanaw*, their passage from boyhood to manhood, they were expected to be expert hunters. She understood that with her head, but her heart rebelled. For some reason, seeing a captive—whether animal or enemy—always made her uneasy.

She looked the oldest boy in the eye and pulled herself to her full height. "Let him go," she said in a voice that left no room for arguing.

Matachanna put a hand on Pocahontas's arm and whispered, "Are you sure?"

Pocahontas ignored her sister. "Let him go."

The oldest boy slid his wooden knife out of the leather thong around his waist. He sawed through the laces holding the animal.

When finally freed, the animal scurried toward the forest with dogs chasing him. Pocahontas knew the dogs would tree the animal but once up in the branches, the *arakun* would be safe.

She turned toward the boys. "You shall be great hunters someday, but never forget—a brave hunter kills his prey swiftly and painlessly. And he only takes what he needs to feed his people."

"Will you tell your father?" the oldest boy asked.

Pocahontas stood with her feet apart and put her hands on her hips. "My father would not like to hear that you were torturing the animal. *Arakun* is not our enemy." She could see worry on the faces of the boys. She smiled. "I will not tell the Powhatan."

As the boys ran off, probably to get into other mischief, Pocahontas sat on a fallen tree and turned toward Matachanna. "You tried to stop me, didn't you? I know you dislike it when I use my position to make people do what I want."

Her sister sat down next to her but didn't speak.

"I don't know why my father—our father—has bestowed such favor on me. I try to use my influence wisely." Pocahontas laughed. "Well, as wisely as I can, having seen only eleven returns of the new leaves."

"Of all our brothers and sisters, you are his favorite," Matachanna said. "He always says, 'My Matoaka, my Pocahontas, she it is who makes me smile.'" She drew out the words, deepening her voice.

Pocahontas laughed at her sister's impersonation of their great father. He spoke exactly like that. Her father began calling her Pocahontas—little mischief-maker—long before she

could remember. Her real name was Amonute, though no one ever said that name. Many called her Matoaka, meaning little snow feather. But when her father started calling her Pocahontas, everyone else did as well.

She didn't really make mischief. It was her father's way of teasing her about walking on her hands instead of her feet, turning somersaults, and hanging from the tree limbs.

She thought about her father. Powerful. No other word described the great Powhatan as well. Her father accomplished what no other chief had ever accomplished. He united all the warring tribes into one great nation, Tsenacomoco. It took years of alliances, battles, and strategies, but here they were—at peace.

All the chiefs of those neighboring tribes gathered during *taquitock*, that time when the leaves turn colors, to bring tributes to the great Powhatan. Pocahontas loved to watch the canoes come ashore piled high with deerskins, *roanoke*, copper, corn, and puccoon root—all for her father. He built a storehouse almost as big as his ceremonial lodge to hold all the tributes.

"Does it seem unfair to you that our father favors me over all his children?" Pocahontas asked Matachanna. Sometimes it worried her. She had more than a hundred half-brothers and half-sisters, including Matachanna, and yet her father showed marked partiality only to her.

"I don't think so," Matachanna said, studying a beetle crawling on the side of her hand. "It has always been so for me."

Pocahontas loved this half-sister. Her father had many wives over his long life and many, many children. How glad

she was that one of them turned out to be Matachanna. Her sister. Her friend.

"So you do not think I should have bullied the boys into letting the *arakun* go?"

Matachanna laughed. "I know you. You cannot stand to see anything held captive. I knew as soon as I saw that furry leg tangled in the trap that you would do whatever it took to save that *arakun*."

"You know me too well."

"I remember when the warriors brought Nokomias and her people to the village. You couldn't stop talking about that."

Pocahontas remembered as well.

In her tenth spring her father sent the braves of her village on a war party to massacre the Chesapeakes. Yes, her wise father, who had made peace with all other tribes—except the faraway Massawomecks, of course. She didn't like to think about the Chesapeakes. The entire time the warriors had been away, she did everything she could to keep from imagining what they were doing.

Even when she should have been sleeping, she thought about the Chesapeakes. She pictured war clubs, screams, and frightened children. Her heart pounded like a drum in her chest. She could feel the beat of it in her ears. When she woke with the morning sun and still could not put the scenes out of her mind, she made her way to her father's lodge, the largest building in the village. Several mats had been removed from the roof to let sunlight stream in, illuminating the great Powhatan. The rest of the lodge was dark and smelled of *apooke* smoke. Her father sat high on his platform of mats at the far end with his wise men crowded around him. Those

warriors too old to join the raid stood around the perimeter of the room.

Pocahontas stood tall as she made her way to her father's dais and sat at his feet without speaking.

"I can see that you have a question dancing on your tongue, *amosens*." Her father used the word for daughter in front of all the men, signifying that he welcomed her. She knew that he always welcomed her, but many of his advisors did not approve of his favoritism. Besides being a child, she was a girl—to them it didn't make sense. The favorite should have been a son. Pocahontas had learned to ignore their frowns.

"Great Powhatan, I know that you rule with wisdom, but why have you sent our warriors out to battle the Chesapeake peoples?" Pocahontas knew this was a bold question and so she kept her voice respectful and formal.

"You always present difficult questions for me, don't you?" He smiled. "I knew you would be a match for me long ago when you were still a baby. The first words you spoke were questions." He reached down and touched her hair. "The ways of men and spirits are difficult to explain."

Pocahontas stayed silent.

"To forge this great nation, this Tsenacomoco, Okeus called us to fight and to make alliances. He told us to take lands and to take people. Yes, *amosens*, we had to take people. We needed to be ready to shoot an arrow into the heart of trouble before trouble could even notch his own arrow."

"But the Chesapeakes have been our friends."

"You speak truth. They always acted as friends, but our wise man—our *quiyoughsokuk*—received a powerful dream.

It told him that an invader would come from the land of the rising sun and that they would someday conquer our people." He took the *apooke* pipe between his lips, closed his eyes, and inhaled deeply. He handed the pipe off to the man seated to his left and let the smoke drift out his mouth. "How could the great Powhatan not answer that danger? Should I have let that threat to our people grow?"

"But are you sure it was the Chesapeakes?" Pocahontas wondered if the threat could have been the *Espaniuks* from across the waters.

Her father didn't answer. He folded his hands and closed his eyes—a sign that he refused to talk further about it.

It wasn't long afterward that the warriors finally came home and crowded into the great lodge. They were still painted for war, white ash slashed with black. They didn't even look like the men Pocahontas knew. She had been sitting on the dais near her father's feet, but when they began to regale their listeners with tales of slaughter and triumph, she stood to leave. As she walked toward the opening, she could see them dancing with the scalp locks. They raised them high in the air, giving whoops of triumph.

Pocahontas walked faster. She couldn't listen. She knew her father did not seek war recklessly and she knew his wisdom was greater than any other *weroance* who had ever served the Powhatan people, but she still could not bring herself to rejoice with her people over their victory.

The next day, a group of returning braves marched a handful of frightened Chesapeake women and children into Werowocomoco. Pocahontas's brother Nantaquaus returned with the warriors. As one of the favorite sons of the great

Powhatan, he held his head high, but Pocahontas noticed that he never met her eyes.

One boy they brought back from the Chesapeake raid had skin the color of the palest moon and hair that looked like corn silk. Strange. Pocahontas could not stop looking at him. Did his color mean he came from the water instead of the good red earth? Was he a different creature? No one would answer her questions. Finally her father told her that the boy went to live with the Arrohattoc. She wished she could have touched him.

One of the other children in the group was Nokomias.

"Are you thinking about Nokomias?" Matachanna asked, bringing Pocahontas back to the present.

"I was remembering the day she came."

"Aren't you glad our village welcomes captives? Our father treats Nokomias like another daughter."

"But I don't understand why people must fight in the first place. If we hadn't wiped out the Chesapeakes, Nokomias would still be with her own people. No one would have had to adopt her."

Matachanna stood up. She had little patience for questioning.

"Why can't people live in peace?" Pocahontas had said those very words to herself many, many times. *Why can't we all live in peace?*

"Why do you ask so many questions, Pocahontas? It is

our way. It has always been our way. Our father says we fight so we can have peace at last."

Matachanna would never understand. She accepted things without question. "Come. Let's go back into the village and find Nokomias." Pocahontas crouched as if to push off for a faster start. "I'll race you to the footbridge."

"As if I could ever beat you in a footrace." The words were flung back at the crouching Pocahontas as Matachanna took off. She may have had a head start but Pocahontas would still beat her.

DAUGHTERS OF THE FAITH SERIES

Almost Home

A STORY BASED ON THE LIFE OF
THE *MAYFLOWER'S* MARY CHILTON

Wendy Lawton

MOODY PRESS
CHICAGO

Contents

Windmills and Wounded Hearts

Mary!" The shout was punctuated by vigorous pounding on the door.

Mary jumped, poking herself with the sewing needle. She stuck the smarting finger into her mouth to keep the drop of blood from staining the *brocade* sleeve she'd been stitching.

"Coming!"

She managed to slide her needle into the lining fabric for safekeeping.

The yelling and banging on the door grew more insistent. "Mary Chilton!"

Mary opened the heavy wooden door to find the errand lad, Cornelijs.

His breath came in gasps. "Your father was set upon by a pack of boys. They pelted him with rocks. Isabella sent me to fetch you." He pressed his side. "Go quick, Mary. He be bleeding somethin' awful."

Her father? Bleeding? Just a few minutes after Mother

and the girls went to work at the linen mill, James Chilton had left to take a small stack of bodices to Mary's oldest sister, Isabella, for embroidery. Whatever could have happened?

"Where is he, Cornelijs?"

"By the windmill near the Grote School. Close to Bell Alley."

Mary grabbed a jumble of linen strips from the scrap basket and rummaged in the *apothecary chest*, finding a small packet of *sticking plaster*. She shoved them into her apron pocket and poured some water from the tin basin into a clay jug before setting out.

She ran along the canal bank, wishing the April thaw had not come. How much faster it would have been if she could have strapped skates to her shoes and skated along the frozen canal like she and her older sisters, Ingle and Christian, did all winter long. Instead, windmills creaked, and the oars from brightly painted canal boats splashed through the water on this breezy spring morning. Doors on many of the cottages stood open as housewives swept or scrubbed their much-prized blue tile floors.

Mary stopped once, bending over to catch her breath, but she did not tarry long. Why did Isabella have to move all the way over to the other side of the tract when she married Roger?

As Mary neared Bell Alley she saw a cluster of people. She made out Isabella talking and gesturing widely to a constable. Drawing closer, Mary heard her sister's anxious voice.

"My father delivered some of the tailoring work to my home and picked up the lace cuffs I finished." Isabella's words caught in her throat. "When he left, I watched from my doorway as he walked alongside the canal."

Isabella spotted Mary. "Oh, I'm so glad you're here, Mary. Elder Brewster came, but I knew you'd be along. I dare not leave the children, and I did not know . . ."

"Go ahead and help the constable finish," Mary interrupted, moving toward the knot of people. Though Mary was nearly twenty years younger than her sister, they understood each other. Isabella hated the sight of blood.

Still sounding flustered, Isabella turned back to the constable and continued. "My father passed the alley, and a gang of boys came out to taunt him. They said something about English killjoys."

Mary could picture it. That kind of thing happened too often. The tolerant Dutch considered it "merriment" carried a little too far. To the sober English *Separatists* like her family, it felt more like harassment.

William Brewster crouched beside her father. As Mary came near, she cringed. Blood matted Father's gray hair and ran down his face from the jagged gash on his forehead. Mary's lungs stung from running. With the blood, the noise, and the milling people, her knees weakened and started to buckle.

"Do not be alarmed, Mary," said Elder Brewster. "Scalp wounds bleed heavily, but they are usually not as bad as they seem. Once we get him home, we will fetch the surgeon, Jacob Hey, to stitch the wound."

Mary stiffened, shaking off the momentary wooziness. "I brought plaster and bandages."

"Thank you, Daughter," her father said with a wobble in his voice. "I can always trust you to take good care of me." He tried to smile but winced instead.

Mary set to work cleaning the gaping wound with water-soaked linen rags. Father closed his eyes and leaned slightly against his friend as she worked. Mary poured a bit of plaster onto a nearby paving stone and dripped two or three drops of water onto the white powder—just enough to make a sticky paste to cover the open gash and stop the bleeding.

As she worked, Mary listened to Isabella tell the constable how the boys picked up stones when Father ignored their taunts. Though they probably intended only to impress each other with their bravado, one rock hit Father with staggering force. The boys scattered.

Mary clenched her teeth rather than risk saying something harsh. She had seen them before. Those boys paraded around Leyden wearing fancy plumed hats and embroidered *doublets* over puffy-padded short *breeches*. Instead of a collar they sported enormous stiffened *ruffs*. Ribbons and bows encircled their *breeches* and decorated their shoes. They resembled a flock of fancy roosters, strutting to show off colorful plumage.

And, for some reason, nothing infuriated them like the plainly dressed men of the Green Gate congregation.

The constable shook his head as he wrote out Isabella's complaint for the *magistrate*. "These big boys have too much spirit in them, but soon they will take their rightful place at the mill." He paused and nodded. "Aye . . . and then their proud necks will be bent to work."

When she finished tending her father, Mary hugged her sister good-bye. "Hurry back to the children, Isabella. Elder Brewster said he would help me see Father home."

Isabella kissed her father's cheek and hesitantly left to go back to her little ones.

Mary poured the rest of the water over her hands, washing the plaster off her fingers and drying her hands on her apron. She gathered the bundle of lace cuffs from the stones at the edge of the canal. Taking Father's arm, she and Elder Brewster helped him to his feet. His normally white collar was creased and soaked with blood. Why would anyone act so cruelly?

Elder Brewster kept breathing deeply through his nostrils. Mary had known him ever since her family moved to Leyden. She recognized his agitation.

"James, I am fair worried about our children," Elder Brewster said.

Mary's father stiffened. "Surely you do not think those boys would attack the children of our congregation. The *magistrate* was right. They just got carried away. Someone tossed a rock and an insult, and it seemed like sport to them." He stopped to catch his breath as they continued to move slowly along the canal. "The Dutch people have been most hospitable, William."

"That I know, James, but the Dutch folk are too easy on their children. They allow them far too much and require far too little. I worry about the influence on our children."

"Aye," Father said. "The younger children in our congregation prefer speaking Dutch over English, and some of the older ones long for the richly decorated clothing."

Mary wished she could speak up, but she knew no one would appreciate a twelve-year-old girl's thoughts on so weighty a matter. For her, 'twasn't so much wishing for beautiful clothes and the colorful life of the Leyden people; 'twas that she yearned to belong—to really belong.

As they walked along the dike, Mary noticed newly inhabited stork nests atop the roofs on many of the colorful cottages. They passed a windmill with flower-filled window boxes on the first floor where the miller's family lived. Slivers of green poked through the soil of a well-tended flower garden—the promise of lilies to come. How Mary loved the beauty and cleanliness of Leyden. One day each week was set aside for scrubbing, and the housewives of Leyden scrubbed everything in sight. They hauled buckets of water out of the canals and splashed the water against the houses and onto the street as they mopped and scrubbed and rubbed and polished.

I don't know where I belong, but someday—if it please the Lord—let me have a house to scrub. Someday, let me have a plot of land for planting. And someday let me unpack our linens and smooth out the wrinkles and lay them in a press. Someday . . .

As Elder Brewster continued to talk with her father, she silently prayed one final request—*And please, give me room in that someday garden to tuck in a flower or two.* Flowers meant you planned to stay.

Mary remembered very little about moving from Sandwich in Kent, England, to Holland nearly ten years ago. She was still in *leading strings* when they left, but even now in Leyden, she sometimes dreamed about the smell of salty sea air and the sound of water lapping up against the quay at Sandwich harbor.

She remembered loving her English house with its whitewashed stone walls. When she played outdoors she would

sing a bumpity-bump song as she dragged her fingers across the rough surface, getting the chalky white all over her hands.

Another picture Mary could never forget was the disturbing pile of belongings carefully bundled together and secured with twine—as if the Chiltons were preparing to move at a moment's notice.

Her memories got tangled with the stories her sisters told, but early on she learned to watch her parents' faces for signs of worry. Trouble seemed to swirl all around them. Even though she caught only snippets of what was happening, she understood the danger.

"Do you remember why we left England?" Mother had asked one day a few years ago as she, Mary, and Isabella hemmed linens. Isabella's wedding was to take place that August, and they were finishing her *dower chest*.

"Not altogether. I do know that there was trouble and that it had to do with St. Peter's." Mary thought for a minute. "When Isabella or Christian or Ingle took me for a walk, I always wanted to go out near the water so I could go in and out of that mossy stone gate."

"Aye. That was Fishergate. You have such a good memory. You were not quite three," Mother said.

"And did Mary ever get mad when I had to change the route and take the long way around so as not to pass the church," Isabella said with a laugh.

"I did not." It wasn't anger; it was that funny longing she often experienced. She missed walking by St. Peter's, because she used to make-believe that the tower was a medieval castle. It was complicated. She did not miss it because it was where she belonged; she missed it because she never had the chance to belong.

"I shall never forget those last days in England," said Isabella.

"Nor will I," Mother said as she tensed her shoulders over her hemstitching.

Later her mother had told her about the church service at the Hooke home when Andrew Sharpe came into the room to fetch help. Mary's mother, along with Goodwife Hooke and Goodwife Fletcher, left in the middle of the service to assist with the birthing of the Sharpe baby. The poor little babe died, and Mother helped lay the tiny coffin into the ground while the elder said words.

The Chiltons knew their church services were illegal. The Church of England had become little more than another institution of the English government, but it was the only recognized church. Church officials were appointed because of the favors their families performed for British royalty, not because they longed to serve God. Though still called a church, it was not a place where people often met Christ or deepened their faith. Church officials spent more time reading the newly released sonnets of the Stratford-upon-Avon *bard*, William Shakespeare, than they did the Bible—after all, they had met Shakespeare in London.

The Chiltons and many of their friends refused to take part in what they believed were empty rituals, including the meaningless funeral rites. They studied the Bible and wanted to experience a fresh faith and the freedom to worship as they pleased.

The fight was on.

King James believed these *dissenters* were chipping away at the very foundations of England. *Separatists*, like Mary's

family, were being imprisoned and persecuted all across England. Some were even hanged for refusing to give up their beliefs. A few slipped out of the country into Holland where freedom of religion existed, but the English authorities watched the ports to keep these troublesome citizens from escaping.

The situation had grown increasingly worse for Mary's family. Church officials paid a visit to the Chilton home. One clergyman spent the entire time yelling and pounding the table till the veins bulged on his neck. They charged her mother with "privately burying a child." According to them, she broke English law and she broke church law.

Mary's father had long been trying to secure passage on a ship out of England, but it was not until the *magistrates* came with an arrest warrant for Mother that the final details hastily fell into place.

Mary could remember bits and pieces of the event. Words swirled around her—words like *excommunication* and prison. And always . . . the soft sobbing of her mother, the worried face of her father, and the bundles of their belongings disappearing one at a time as Father secretly stowed them aboard a ship waiting in the harbor.

The last time Mary saw her English home she stood tiptoe on a wooden crate so she could peer over the salty-tasting rail. The ship carrying the Chiltons and all their belongings left the mouth of the River Stour into the Strait of Dover and headed toward the North Sea and Holland. The stone walls and arched bridges guarding the town of Sandwich eventually

faded into the shimmer of water as the flap, flap, flap of sails being unfurled signaled that she was headed into the unknown.

w w w w

"Mary, are you growing weary?" Elder Brewster's concern drew Mary back to the conversation between her father and Elder Brewster. As usual she had been daydreaming.

"No, Elder," she replied.

Elder Brewster took Mary at her word. He turned back to his friend. "The Dutch people have been kind," said the elder. "I'll not be finding fault with them."

"I know," her father said. "Since coming from England it is so difficult to make a living. Leyden is mostly a good, wholesome place, but it holds little promise for us. We work in the linen mills or the woolen factories, and our wives must work and our children work, and yet . . . we have nothing."

"Aye," said Elder Brewster. "When some of our brothers think back to their land holdings in England, it becomes easy to get discouraged. We need to remember the terrible persecution back in England. Here, at least, we worship as we choose."

"But I long to own land again," her father said as he wiped aside a piece of sticky blood-matted hair. "Sometimes I look out onto those fields where the drying linen stretches out for miles and miles and I . . ."

Mary knew her father would not finish. He could not put that ache into words, but she often watched the longing in his face as he looked onto the bleaching fields near their home.

He would squint his eyes, and she guessed that he pictured fields of grain like he used to have at home.

But her father always changed the subject away from the sentimental. "It worries me, William, that the English authorities plot to have you returned to England." Elder Brewster was only a few years younger than her father, but James Chilton took a fatherly interest in all members of the congregation. "You be careful, William Brewster, with that little printing press of yours."

"Aye. Our *Choir Alley Press* is beginning to rattle a few windows in Merrie Old England." That was an understatement. The press, sometimes called the *Pilgrim Press*, secretly published several books that infuriated King James and his bishops. Elder Brewster abruptly changed the subject. "So, you are planning on making the move with us then, James?"

Move? Mary dropped her father's arm. "Move, Father?" Surely she heard wrong. She'd seen no bundles piling up in the hall. "What do you mean, Elder Brewster?"

The elder spoke in a soft voice, "Mary, take your father's arm. I did not mean to speak out of turn."

Mary lifted her father's arm again, and, as he seemed to slump against her, she whispered, "We are almost home, Father." Elder Brewster's question still rang in her ears, as she repeated the soothing words, "Almost home."

A deep ache began to grow in Mary's chest, and no matter how quickly she blinked her eyes, she felt the sting of threatening tears.

DAUGHTERS OF THE FAITH SERIES

The Tinker's Daughter

A STORY BASED ON THE LIFE OF MARY BUNYAN

Wendy Lawton

MOODY PUBLISHERS
CHICAGO

Contents

Farewell at the Forge

Clang, clink, clink. Clang, clink, clink. The sledgehammer beat a steady rhythm against the hot metal sheet on the anvil.

"Papa? What are you making?" Mary spoke loudly because of the roaring fire in the forge.

"When did you come in, wee Mary?"

"I have been sitting on the stool for a while, listening to you work." Mary asked her question again. "What are you making?"

"I am making a lantern," he answered, hitting the metal again.

Mary could tell by the sound that the metal was not yet thin enough for Papa to begin piercing the intricate patterns that would allow light to escape. Once the sheet had been perforated, he would shape the metal into a cylinder. How good it felt to sit beside the warm forge while her father worked the metal! The sounds and smells reminded her of the old times.

"I came out here to think," Papa said. "I can always think better with a hammer in hand."

"Do you want me to go back into the cottage so that you can be alone?"

"Nay, Mary." She heard him put his tools down. He closed the door to the forge. She could feel her father pull his bigger stool next to hers. "There. 'Tis much quieter. We haven't had a good talk in a long time." Her father's strong hands lifted her off her stool and into the familiar nest of his lap. She almost protested that she was *not* a babe in arms, but she wriggled deeper into the warmth and comfort instead. Inhaling the mixture of wood smoke, soap, and earth that mingled with the beloved scent of her father was a comfort not to be denied.

"'Tis a good thing you are still a wee mite, Mary."

"I am not . . ." Mary started to protest but she could feel the chuckles rumbling in her father's belly and she realized that he was teasing her. "Oh, Papa."

"You are no bigger than my anvil. But you are much more interesting."

"Will you tell me what you see . . . please?" Nobody could paint a picture with words the way her father, John Bunyan, could. Mary, blind since birth, lived for her father's descriptions. They made her feel as though she could see.

"Aye. Now then, where shall I begin? Picture a thick head of fine hair, curling slightly at the shoulder, eyes the color of this smooth piece of metal," he put a cold piece of metal in her hand, "and an uncommonly tickly mustache. I must confess —I am a handsome man. I stand taller than any in Bedford. I have—"

"Oh, Papa. Do not tease me so and stop tickling me with your mustache! I know what you are like. Everyone talks of you," she said, teasing him right back, "although never have I heard you referred to as handsome."

Papa's stomach bounced her as he laughed.

She felt shy asking, but the older she was, the more she wondered about herself. "Could you tell me what I look like?"

How Papa loved to tease his children. It was hard to get a solemn answer from him. "You may be a little bigger than my anvil." He lifted her high into the air, feet dangling. "Hmm, I would say about five *stone* in weight."

"I know the lightness of my frame, but I also know I am as strong as an ox." She was getting exasperated. *Don't fathers ever know when to be serious with their daughters?*

Her father settled her on his knees. "Well, little daughter, I must admit that you are passing fair."

"You mean I am pretty?"

"You have curls the color of wild honey warmed by the fireplace." He pulled on one of her ringlets.

Mary was forever trying to pull Mama's tortoise-shell comb through her tangle of curls, but she loved the picture of warm honey. The smooth richness of honey was hard to forget, even in this month of November. Each summer the honey was warmed so that the wax of the honeycomb would float to the surface. The smell was not easily forgotten. And the taste . . . "I do like the sound of that color." She waited for him to go on.

"Your eyes are the same gentle blue of your mama's silky ribbon." His voice had become as soft as the well-worn ribbon.

Mary slept with that ribbon each night since her mama died and kept it tucked in her apron pocket by day.

"Your mama was a beautiful woman, Mary," her father said, reading her thoughts. "She had the same honey hair as you, but instead of your curls, hers was smooth and straight." He sighed, and the slow intake and release of breath shifted Mary ever so slightly on his lap. "When we wed, she brought me the most valuable dowry a man could obtain."

Dowry. The word sounded familiar, but Mary could not place it. "What is a dowry?"

"When a couple marries, the girl's family shares its wealth with the newlyweds. Most often it is silver coins or even gold, but your mama's dowry was far more valuable." He paused and Mary waited for the story. "She brought two books with her to the marriage: *Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven* by Pastor Arthur Dent and *Practice of Piety* by Lewis Bayly."

Mary heard a scuffling sound by the far window and another sound that caused fear to grip her stomach—a cynical laugh that could only belong to Gifre. "Did you hear that, Papa?" asked Mary.

"Hear what?"

"I thought I heard Gifre sneaking around outside." Perhaps she was wrong.

"No, I heard nothing over the din of the forge, but my hearing is not as sensitive as yours. Has that boy been bullying you again?" Papa asked.

"He never stopped, but I do not allow it to worry me." Mary stiffened her back. After all, he would not risk hurting her . . . would he? "But we were speaking of Mama's dowry—you said the books were valuable. More valuable than gold?"

"These were," her father answered, "for they helped me find my way to the Truth." He paused. "Never have I hidden my own rough youth from you, Mary. It was said that there was no one in the village of Elstow who could blaspheme like the young tinker, John Bunyan. I am not proud of it, mind you, but it is a fact."

"And these books taught you how to stop cursing?" Mary asked.

"Oh, no, I could never have changed my life by myself. They pointed me to the One who would change me. Your mama helped set me on the path too. No question about that."

"If you tried hard enough, surely you could have conquered the habit," Mary said with determination.

"My fiercely independent little daughter," her father said, sighing. "You'll have your own arduous journey to make until you learn that you cannot do it in your own strength. I doubt not that you will come to Christ, but you shall have to discover the Truth on your own, just as I did."

"Tell me what you mean, Father."

"You have spent so many years proving that you are little hindered by blindness that you have developed a fearsome determination. Your toughest lesson may be learning how to depend on God and on other people." Papa was quiet for a time. "Your mama would be proud of you, Mary. Look at how much you have done since she has been gone. You are scarcely ten years old, yet you have helped your sister care for the household and you have been a little mama to Jake and Thomas."

"I loved doing it, Papa. Bets and I were a team until—" Mary realized she had said too much. Papa had married Eliza-

beth the year following Mama's death. Elizabeth was kind, with a soft voice and gentle hands. Bets said their new stepmother was pretty, but she was only seventeen years old. Seventeen. Just seven years older than Mary. There was no way Elizabeth could ever be a mama to Mary.

"Mary, you are the oldest child and I know you had a hard time accepting Elizabeth." After giving Mary a chance to reply, he continued. "I never thought I would be able to love again after your mama died, but Elizabeth was a gift from God. Coming into our family of four children cannot have been easy for her, but she has done her best to ease the burden."

"I know, Papa." Mary hung her head as Papa continued to talk.

"I had hoped you would be friends long before this, and now with the new baby on the way . . ." His arms enfolded her as he rocked her back and forth as if she were the baby. She wished she could stay like this forever, even if she was almost grown.

"I will try, Father. I will try much harder."

"You will, lass. I value your strength. If anything were to happen, you would be one to depend on."

Mary shivered. *If anything were to happen.*

Ever since he started preaching about four years ago, things had not been the same. How odd that her father was at the center of this whirlwind of English politics and religion. She remembered when he worked as a tinker in Elstow. How she yearned for the days when he spent his time mending pots and kettles and fashioning things out of metal.

The trouble had started several weeks earlier with warnings. Late at night men came to the cottage to speak with her father. "You must stop preaching," one warned. "Word is out that in spite of promising tolerance, the parish churches are pressuring King Charles to do something about the *nonconformists*."

Another voice chimed in, "Ever since the *royalists* managed to get Charles on the throne they have been anxious for a restoration of their former power." The voice grew more insistent. "They see you as a threat."

"They do not endure threats lightly," the first voice warned.

Mary recalled the sound of Father shifting his stance. By the thud of his firmly planted feet, she knew that he was not going to budge.

"Thank you, brothers, for the warning," he had said. "I know that you did so at great risk to your own families. I wish it did not have to come to this, but we made too much progress to allow our freedoms to be swallowed by the state church's bid to regain power."

They argued for hours. Much of it was confusing to Mary, but she understood that her father was too visible and too successful as a lay preacher to go unnoticed. The people who assembled to hear him talk about the Lord had begun to number into the hundreds. Papa made words come alive. No one could make Mary see more clearly than Papa. He seemed to have that effect on everyone.

When they left, Mary had hundreds of questions for her father. "Why are we in trouble, Papa?"

"'Tis not 'we' who are in trouble, wee Mary, 'tis I."

"What did you do wrong?"

"God called me to preach and I answered that call. During Cromwell's time we worshipped with complete freedom outside of the state church. Were it just a few years earlier, my activities would be perfectly legal. Now—who knows?"

"Can you simply stop preaching?"

"No, lass. I spent many years of my life wandering from God. If I have learned but one lesson, it is that I would sooner face danger in partnership with Him than a life of ease apart from Him."

"What will happen if you continue?" Mary could not imagine life without Papa.

"I am afraid it will go hard on us, Mary. Unless something intervenes, I will be arrested. If I still don't agree to give up my calling, I will be sent away from England, or worse." He paused. "Are you sure you want to hear the answers to your questions?"

"Aye, Papa."

"Aye." Her father sighed. "Never have I seen a one like you, Mary. You are a child in years only—you have borne more than your share of burdens." She found herself in her favorite place, sitting on Papa's lap, surrounded by his great, gentle arms.

"How I pray that you learn you cannot carry your burden alone."

"Mary, what are you thinking about?"

They were still sitting by the forge, but Mary's mind had been miles away.

"I was thinking about the trouble. Do you think—" Mary heard the cottage door slam and Bets calling for Papa.

"In here." Papa put Mary down, but held on to her hand. She could hear him breathing slowly, as if to fortify himself.

"Papa! There are men coming," Bets announced breathlessly. "Elizabeth says it is the constables." Mary could hear the quiver of fear in Bets's voice. Bets was just ten months younger than Mary and they had been each other's confidants for as long as they could remember. It took a lot to scare Bets.

"Girls, into the cottage by the back door. I shall close the forge and follow."

Papa had barely gotten into the house when they heard a ferocious pounding on the front door. The battering continued until the door was opened and Papa was summoned. Mary crowded close to Papa so she could tell what was happening. The constable with the heaviest tread—the one who smelled of roast *mutton*—cleared his throat with an explosive harrumphing sound and then began reading in a self-important voice. She could only catch snatches of the unfamiliar words.

". . . an upholder and maintainer of unlawful assemblies and conventicles." He made more phlegm-clearing noises. She could hear a crowd gathering outside the open door. ". . . not conforming to the National Worship of the Church of England."

He was arresting Papa for unlicensed preaching. "John Bunyan, you are under arrest and sentenced to perpetual banishment by order of his majesty, Charles II, King of England." Perpetual banishment! Her stomach twisted. That meant that he was to be sent away from England forever.

Mary heard the crowd milling outside the open door.

Some were even weeping. As her father slowly gathered his things, she heard a thud and felt the shudder of something heavy hitting the floor. Someone outside shrieked, "Elizabeth has fainted."

Mary moved to where Elizabeth had been standing. Her father leaned close to her ear. His voice was broken—so different from the playful, teasing voice in the forge. "Mary, take care of Elizabeth. If you can, please get word to me at the Bedford *Gaol* that everything is well—or find someone to send a note to me—anything. Anything." He kneeled on the floor by his unconscious wife for what seemed to be the longest time. Was he praying? Was he crying? She heard him kiss Elizabeth.

Mary could hear her sister Bets bring the baby to their father. As usual, Bets was trying to be strong, but Mary could sense the wad of sorrow groaning in Bets's chest. Two lingering kisses and murmurings—one must have been for Bets, the other for little Thomas. She felt the whoosh of air as her brother rushed over and she heard the sound of her father ruffling seven-year-old Jake's hair.

At last he drew Mary tightly to his side. "Oh, wee Mary . . ." The rest of the words seemed lost in his throat. He ran his calloused fingers down Mary's face, as if to savor its softness. His kiss on her forehead was as gentle as the stroke of a feather. As he dipped his hand into her honey hair, she felt him let it curl around his finger. She reached her hands up to memorize his face and touched wetness on his cheeks.

He gently took her hands away. "Take care of them, Father God," he whispered.

His body seemed loath to move, but she could feel him

tighten with resolve as he stood. His reluctant steps vibrated on the bare floor as he moved toward the door, speaking to the crowd outside. “Leaving my family is like pulling the flesh from my bones.” The words seemed to be ripped from his very soul.

DAUGHTERS OF THE FAITH SERIES

Shadow of His Hand

A STORY BASED ON THE LIFE OF
HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR ANITA DITTMAN

Wendy Lawton

MOODY PUBLISHERS
CHICAGO

Contents

Look at Me

Look at me. Look at me!" The delicate curve of the girl's arm continued through the arc of her two middle fingers —a perfect ballet position. She pirouetted with a sense of grace and balance rare in a five-year-old. Blonde braids flew straight out as she turned. *"Vati,"* she said to her father, "Look at me."

"Anita, stop showing off and quit making all that racket." Her father turned to her mother. "Hilde, get that child out of here." He sputtered in anger, his German words tumbling over one another, "It's insult enough that you failed to give me even one son, but must I put up with two tiresome girls every waking hour?" He raised his hands toward the ceiling. "Whatever possessed me to marry a Jew?"

"Fritz! Not in front of the children."

Anita stood frozen for a moment before she slipped into a corner, squeezing herself in between the wall and the chest. Her slender arm reached out to pull nearby Teddy onto her

lap. She hated it when her mother and father fought. Lately it happened all the time, but Anita never meant to start yet another argument.

"Hella, take your little sister out to the kitchen." *Mutti* used her hands to gently hurry them toward the door.

Anita hung back, wanting to be near her mother, but Hella gave her a sharp jerk that left no doubt about the outcome. Once in the kitchen, Anita leaned her face against the doorjamb.

"Anita tries so hard to please you. Can't you see that she only wants your approval?" Mutti's voice could be heard in the kitchen almost as clearly as if they stood in the same room. The Dittman row house, located in the Breslau suburb of Zimpel, was spacious and luxurious, but it had one drawback—angry voices penetrated the walls as if they were made of paper.

"Don't start with me, Hilde." Vati paced the floor. "I have my own difficulties and I don't need your complaints heaped on top of them."

"Trouble crowds in on all of us these days, Fritz, but can't we try to shield the girls as long as possible?"

"Hella does her best to please me—I have no problem with Hella, but Anita . . ."

Anita put her hands over her ears. Hella tried to pull her outside, but Anita scooted under the table, looking for refuge. Her stomach hurt.

"Why do you show such favoritism? Hella is ten years old. Of course she is more able to control herself." Mutti's voice tightened. "Anita may be tiny, but she is a bundle of energy and creativity. If you could just see her for herself and forget the boy you wished for . . ."

"I admit it—I wished for a boy. A lot of good that did. I shall discuss this no further." Vati slammed a hand down. The sound made Anita flinch. "Do you know what I really wish?"

Mutti did not answer.

"I wish I had never married you. Whatever was I thinking? Marrying a Jew—it's sheer madness for an Aryan!" Vati spoke each word with chilling precision. "Hitler is calling it 'race disgrace' now—the mixing of pure German blood with that of the Jew."

Mutti's quiet sobs carried to the kitchen.

"Let me tell you, Hilde, my wife," the words my wife dripped with sarcasm, "that one stupid act has caused me no end of grief."

Mutti still didn't answer, but her responses never mattered to Vati. Once he got going, he could argue for hours all by himself.

"Not that you care one whit about my trouble. Things are changing—that's a fact—and here I am, saddled with a Jewish wife and two half-breed daughters."

Anita heard the door slam.

"Anita, Hella, come in here, please." Mutti's voice sounded sad.

Hella took Anita's hand and pulled her out from under the table.

"Mutti, I'm sorry." Anita put her arms around her mother's leg. "I never meant to make Vati angry."

"Hush, Anita," Mutti said in that soothing voice. "Hush." She put an arm around Hella as well. "Your father worries about things and takes that worry out on us."

"Vati hates me." Anita's stomach still hurt.

"Don't be silly, Anita." Hella's voice rang with impatience. "Fathers do not hate their own children."

"Hella is right," Mutti said. "Vati's anger comes out in mean words, but that anger is not really directed at you, Anita." She smoothed the flyaway strands that escaped Anita's braids.

Anita didn't argue with Mutti, but she felt Vati's rejection whenever she tried to put her hand in his hand or when she tried to sit in his lap. He always found an excuse to pull away or shoo her off. She'd become an expert at watching his face for reactions. When Hella came near, he rarely pulled away.

"Why does Vati get so angry these days?" Hella sounded confused.

"It's complicated." Mutti stood up and moved across the room to straighten out the folds of the curtain. "It's politics and his job mostly."

"Politics?" Hella took Teddy off the floor and sat him on Anita's lap.

"You know about all the trouble brewing with Hitler's ideas, neh?" Mutti asked.

"Some."

"The newspaper Vati edited has been part of the movement they call the *Social Democrats*. Everyone expected things to get better after the financial chaos of the last few years, but here it is 1933 and Germany is more uneasy than ever."

Anita poked at Teddy's eye. She didn't understand what Mutti said. She wished they would talk about things that she knew.

"Hitler hates the Social Democrats, and Vati now must join the Nazi party or . . ."

"What's Nazi, Mutti?" Anita disliked the way the word

sounded. When people said it, they pulled their lips back and it made their faces look angry.

"It's not something you need worry about." Mutti came and playfully pulled on Anita's braids. "Your tiny head should be filled with ballet, pretty dresses, your fuzzy family of teddy bears, and—"

"You don't need to tell her that, Mutti." Hella lifted her hands in exasperation. "She cares for nothing but drawing and dancing anyway."

"And that, *Mein Liebling,* is how life should be for a five-and-a-half-year-old. Come, girls, and let's sit and talk while I turn edges on this chiffon ballet skirt for our littlest ballerina."

Anita pulled a long, deep breath in through her nose, picturing how fluttery the petals of chiffon would look when she twirled. Just like the storms she loved, her gray mood passed quickly and she once again resembled her aunts' nickname for her—Ray of Sunshine.

Teddy and his bear friends, along with pencils, drawing paper, and ballet continued to fill Anita's life. When Mutti knelt down after ballet lessons to remove Anita's ballet shoes, the little girl always cried. She never wanted to stop dancing. At night she slept with her well-worn ballet slippers tucked under her pillow and dreamed of a wooden stage ringed with lights. Though she was the smallest girl in her class, in her dream when the *danseur* lifted her high above his head, she towered over all the dancers on stage. The shimmering colors, the smell of chalk on the floor, the dust motes rising up

from the gaslights, and the rhythmic sound of toe shoes making padded thuds and slaps against the boards made her dream seem more real than her waking hours.

It was mid-dream one night when she woke to a gentle shaking.

"Anita, *Mein Liebling,* wake up. It's Mutti."

She rolled over, trying to recapture the dream.

"Anita. Listen to Mutti." Her mother pulled her to a sitting position. "I must leave, but I will come to see you tomorrow."

Leave? Suddenly the dancers faded and Anita focused on her mother. "You cannot leave me, Mutti!" She reached arms around Mutti's neck and continued screaming the same phrase over and over.

"Anita, Anita. You are very nearly six years old. Please don't carry on so. You are breaking Mutti's heart."

"I've had enough of this." Vati came into the room. He sounded angry. "I want you out of my house, Hilde. I want you gone now."

"But my daughters—surely you do not want them?"

"It's not a matter of what I want. I am an Aryan and my daughters are half Aryan. Your Jew blood taints their veins and that's bad enough, but I'll not allow your Jew ideas to contaminate them any longer." He stood with his arms crossed across his chest and his feet planted wide apart—an immovable force.

"You may have the right under Hitler, Fritz, but what about what's right under heaven?" Mutti's voice resonated through the house and a sleepy Hella came into Anita's room.

"Don't call on heaven, Hilde." Vati's voice cracked.

"Surely even you are not hypocrite enough. You do not believe in the God of your people. You do not believe in the God of the heavens either. Admit it." He stood with his hands on his hips and his feet apart. "That modern religion of yours believes in a weak concoction of Buddha, Mohammed, Jesus, animal gods, even—I don't even know how many gods you have." Vati straightened his back. "I am proud to be an atheist. In fact, I'm a devout atheist—I do not believe in God. Period." When he said "God" he spat it out of the back of his throat, like it was a bitter mouthful. "Religion is for the weak and you, Hilde, are the weakest of all. You cannot even manage to embrace one religion and stick there. You need to create your own little crutch made up of a hodgepodge of deities."

"Fritz, my philosophy doesn't matter here." She looked at the two girls. Hella stood frozen. Anita wept. "Hella, take your little sister to the kitchen . . . please. I will be there to speak with you as soon as I am done speaking to your father."

Anita grabbed Teddy and took Hella's hand. Once in the kitchen, the shivering Anita crawled under the table again, listening. Hella pulled out a chair and sat down. Anita could see her sister's foot rubbing up and down the calf of her leg. That's what Hella always did when she was frightened.

"I want you out of here, Hilde, and that's the end of it." Father's voice carried all the way into the kitchen. "I hope to cover my Social Democrat activities by joining the Nazi party and turning over the newspaper to them." He made that harrumphing sound he made to cover embarrassment. "After all, what good are ideals when one's life is at stake?"

Mutti said something, but Anita couldn't make it out.

"I may get away with my past by trying to fade away during this confusing time, but I'll never get away with my continued 'race disgrace.'"

Anita didn't understand much of what Vati said. She only knew that Vati wanted Mutti to go away.

"Don't leave me, Mutti," she cried to herself.

"Hush, don't upset Vati." Hella said in a whisper. "Poor Vati; he must do it."

Anita put her fist in her mouth to stop the cries. Hella loved Vati above all else. Even though Anita understood little, she knew Vati loved Hella best and Hella returned that love with unquestioning loyalty.

Vati lived in their home, but he was a stranger to Anita—a stranger she longed to please, but never could.

"If I gave the girls to you, I would have to give you money for their care. I would have to get you an apartment." Vati coughed. "This argument tires me."

Mutti said something else, too low to hear.

"They can learn to take care of themselves. You spoil them. In fact, they can care for me." His voice got louder. "Girls, come."

Hella pulled Anita out from under the table and pushed her ahead into Anita's bedroom where Vati and Mutti were. Anita still clutched Teddy.

"Your mother must leave, but you will visit her . . ."

"No! Mutti, don't leave me."

Hella pulled her little sister's braid. "Stop it, Anita, stop it!" Hella moved to stand in front of Vati. "I will help you, Vati. I can cook."

Anita looked at Mutti's face in time to see her wince in

pain as she started to reach her hand toward Hella, but then quickly dropped it to her side.

"Don't leave me, Mutti," Anita whimpered, quieter now but no less determined.

"Anita." Her father squatted down in front of her. Anita had never seen him so close. He smelled of warm wool and shaving soap. "Stop crying and I'll give you a present." Vati pulled Teddy out of her arms and threw him on the bed. He reached down into his satchel and pulled out the large golden teddy with jointed arms and legs—the very one she'd longed for each time they passed the toyshop window. "Look . . . a nice new teddy."

Anita shook her head and pushed the bear away. She crawled up on the bed to retrieve Teddy. Without saying a word, she crawled back down and went over to Mutti and took her hand.

"Fine, then." Vati took the new bear and flung it across the room. "You win, Hilde. Take her and leave. Hella will stay with me."

Anita wanted Hella to take her hand, but Hella stood over by Vati. Her eyes didn't blink, but Anita saw her lips quiver.

"Hilde. Open up, Hilde. It's me, Inge." The knocking on the door woke Anita from a deep sleep. *Why is our neighbor, Inge, knocking at our door?* Rolling claps of thunder punctuated the banging on the door.

What a minute—Inge is no longer our neighbor. We left Vati last night. We're at Tante's house, not in our own house. She

thought of her sister. *I wonder if Hella is sleeping in my bed at home?* The knocking grew more insistent. *Why is Vati's neighbor, Inge, knocking at Tante's house?* Anita shook Mutti, lying next to her on the cot. "Mutti, someone's knocking on the door for us. It's Inge."

Mutti stood up and wrapped a shawl over her nightdress. Anita stayed in bed, listening to the claps of thunder. She loved storms. Her mother often told her about the ferocious thunderstorm that raged the night she was born.

Drawing back the lock and opening the door, Mutti greeted her friend.

"Oh, Hilde. You must come." Inge's breath came out in uneven puffs as she grabbed her friend's arm with both of her hands. "You must come. Hurry." She took up much of the doorway with her soggy woolen cape.

Anita slipped out of bed to get a better look.

"What time is it? Come where?" Mutti wrapped the shawl tighter around her shoulders.

"It's in the early hours of the morning—perhaps two." Inge shivered.

"Forgive my manners. Come in. Catch your breath."

The younger woman stepped inside, but did not sit down. "You must come back to your house. When you left yesterday, Fritz left soon afterward. We didn't think anything about it, since he rarely stayed at home when you were there." She poked a wet strand of hair under her hood. "Tonight, when the storm broke, we heard banging sounds from inside the house and thought perhaps Fritz had returned."

Mutti began to wring her hands.

"When my Otto came home an hour ago, he heard the

knocking and banging sounds right through Fritz' door. As he went to the door to ask if all was well, Hella called out." Inge put her hands on her hips and shook her head. "Your Fritz had not yet been back since he left the night before—more than twenty-four hours earlier. The thunderstorm had terrified Hella, but the door was locked and she had no way to get help."

"Hella . . . oh, no. My Hella . . ." Mutti began to pull her clothes on over her bed clothes.

"She told me you were staying over here temporarily and asked if I would get you."

"Thank you, thank you." Mutti kissed her friend.

Without further conversation, a tired, wet Inge took her leave and hurried to go back home.

Mutti dressed Anita and the two of them followed, walking back to the only home Anita had ever known.

When they arrived, Mutti fitted her key into the lock and Hella practically fell out of the house into her mother's arms. Hella clung to Mutti, sobbing. Anita stood alongside, patting Hella's arm. As Mutti murmured comforting words, they gathered a few things and left.

As they walked down the silent street in the hour just before dawn, Hella let go of her mother's hand to shift her umbrella. "I should have left Vati a note." Her sobs had long since given way to sniffles. "Do you think he'll worry?"

Days later when the three of them came back to pack their things for the move to the tiny apartment they'd found

on the other side of Zimpel, Anita's stomach ached the whole time.

Hella slowly packed her things, carefully smoothing out all the wrinkles and lingering over every memento. Anita figured Hella could finish much faster if she wouldn't keep looking to the front room where Vati sat, shoulders hunched, listening to the *wireless*.

As they gathered things for the last parcel, Vati walked into the room and put a tentative hand on Mutti's arm. "I . . . well, I realized it wouldn't have worked out caring for Hella after all. Sorry."

Hella kept her head down and moved toward the door.

As they stood there watching the movers loading the last box on the truck, Vati looked hard at Mutti. "I agreed to give you and the girls money each month against my better judgment. I don't have to, by law, you know, because you are a Jew." His eyes narrowed and he lowered his voice to a whisper. "I think I've managed to make a clean break from my political past. You see before you a proud member of the Nazi Party." He paused and then spoke with precision, "If you so much as breathe a word about my past, Hilde Dittman, you'll not get another cent. Do you understand?"

Mutti just looked at him.

"*Auf Wiedersehen*, Vati." Hella ran and hugged him. "I love you."

Vati stood still, looking uncomfortable with his arms by his sides. As Hella moved away, Vati reached an awkward hand up to pat her head.

Anita stood nearby, wishing he'd say good-bye. *Look at me, Vati, Look at me.*