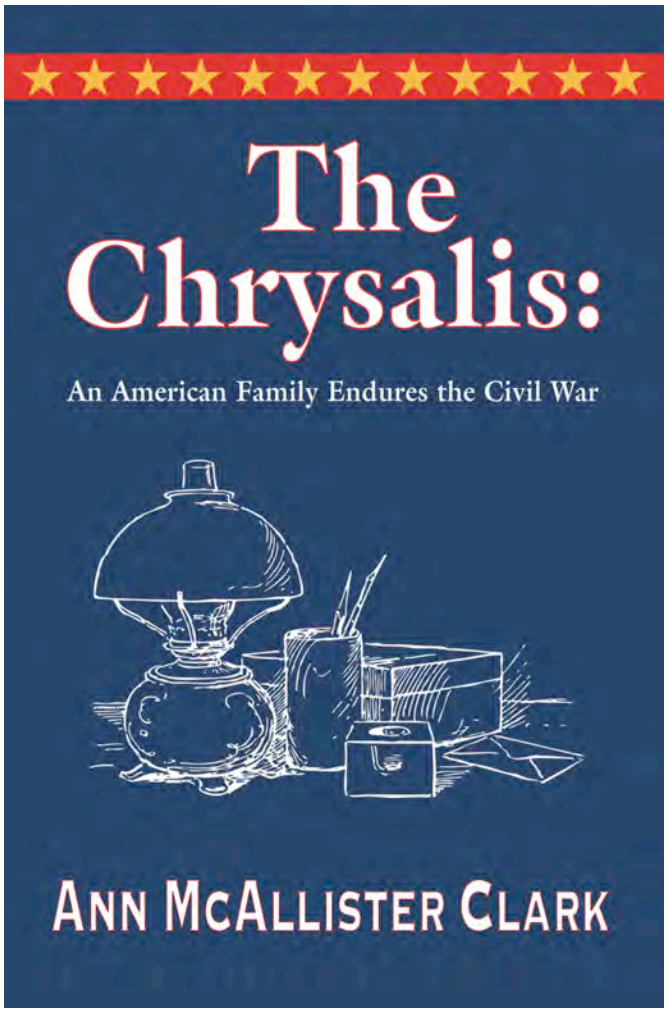

Northern families separated from southern relatives by a Civil War. Battlefield and survivor journalism, Mathew Brady photography on battlefields, nursing at battlefields, families trying to maintain their farming and incomes during a War.

THE CHRYSALIS: AN AMERICAN FAMILY ENDURES THE CIVIL WAR

By Ann McAllister Clark

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The Chrysalis:

An American Family Endures the Civil War

ANN MCALLISTER CLARK

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Main Characters

Philip Madden – northern newspaper writer
Mary Madden – Philip's wife, and sister of Claudie Ingram
Mary Ruth (Ruthie, Pup) Madden – daughter
Eddie Madden (Little Eddie) – son
Thomas Madden – son

Cully Ingram – southern lawyer and plantation owner
Claudie Ingram – Cully's wife, and sister of Mary Madden
Laura Madge Ingram – daughter, and Ruthie's cousin

Aunt Charlotte Haribondt – Philip Madden's aunt
Bridget Malone – the Madden's Irish housemaid

George Jamison – the Madden's Galway Farm overseer
Eva Jamison – George's wife
Jackson Jamison – son, and Mary Ruth's fiancé
Bobby Jamison – son
James Jamison – son

Nathan Whitman – doctor at Union Hospital

Mathew Brady – photographer
Captain Wirtz – commander of Andersonville Prison

Dorothea Dix – developer of the Sanitary Commission
Clara Barton – Civil War nurse
Louisa May Alcott – journalist and author of *Hospital Sketches* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

White Snowy Owl – persistent bird of prey

Prologue

High in the walnut tree a white Snowy Owl perched among bare, ice-coated branches. From the tuft of white head feathers the golden eyes of the raptor glared unblinking and with great accuracy at the Madden farm below. The owl surveyed the pony's paddock at the side of the barn, past the deep, icy well that was covered with withered dry vines, and then on over to the large farmhouse beyond.

The wind—calling, howling, and swirling dry snow around the house was not able to enter—an outsider unwelcome. Sparks from the tended fireplace shot from the farmhouse chimney, piercing the evening's frigid cold. The sharp, sweet smell of burning apple wood filled the air.

With carefree voices, the five members of the Madden family along with their three visiting southern relatives, the Ingrams, stood around the upright piano and sang their favorite Yuletide carols. All but the two fathers, Philip Madden and Cully Ingram, were oblivious to the growing storm around them, acutely aware of storms in the Deep South.

In the barn, Jackson Jamison's father watched his son aim the new rifle at that precise spot between the ferocious wild dog's eyes. The teenage boy blinked once. The blast filled Jackson's head with a curious mix of hate and sorrow.

It was Christmas Eve 1860, on Galway Farm.

Chapter 1

1860

Although it looked tranquil from the outside, Galway Farm's barn was sometimes a dangerous place. The kittens and diminutive barn mice learned to run for cover and safety.

The hired man, Mr. George Jamison, and his seventeen-year-old son, Jackson, were dealing with one of the many perils found on a sheep farm—a wild dog.

"Shoot! Shoot 'im, son!" George shouted. His voice echoed into the high rafters of the barn.

A small flock of barn swallows, startled from their peaceful nesting places, fluttered to their perches up on the beams. Then, silent and swift, they zoomed down and out the barn doors on barely a breath, like enchanting little black-caped witches jolted from their warm nests.

Jackson's arm trembled and his mouth was dry as the dusting of frigid snow swirling across the barn roof. He squeezed his index finger against the cool, smooth trigger of his

Sharps Carbine rifle, the Christmas present his father had bought just up the road at Harpers Ferry and given him earlier that morning. For a moment he thought—he hoped that the mechanism was jammed. The violent animal's flashing, wet teeth threatened a four-day-old lamb.

The dog growled and snarled at the lamb with excited fury, and Jackson's heart finally grew strong. He pulled his cold finger until at last a deafening shot left the rifle barrel with a flash of fire. The dog fled the barn.

George Jamison looked at his son. "Too late. But we saved one more lamb from those miserable dogs." He pulled a rag from his back pocket and wiped his hands. "Let's get washed up, son," he said as if nothing had happened. "Your ma will be wondering what's keeping us. The Maddens are waitin' for us up at the big house."

The father draped his arm around his son's shoulders, adding, "And you know Mrs. Madden and Bridget and the girls are sure to be fixin' up a fine meal for us."

Young Jackson Jamison did not know for sure if he would be able to eat any of the holiday meal.

***

The December evening sun, heading toward nightfall, made its quiet descent over the Maryland farm and onward toward the west, changing the winter sky to a deceptively calm purple-mauve. George Jamison was a vigilant farmer, mindful and respectful of what havoc the weather could generate. He always kept a watchful eye skyward. Leaving the barn, he did not miss the ominous storm clouds moving up from the southwest. He stopped and watched as if reading their message while

thoughtfully pulling at his short beard beneath his precisely trimmed mustache.

"We've got a Nor'easter comin' up from the south, son."

Jackson looked up at the darkening clouds.

Mr. Jamison continued. "It's beginning down there in the southwest. See?" He swung his right arm around to the north. "It'll swirl counterclockwise right up over us to the northeast and around again to the west. Like a big oblong circle. It's the worst kind of storm. We best be getting' on home."

Both men stood watching for a moment, until George turned and walked toward their cottage up behind the barn and past the orchard. The son followed his father around the side of the barn. His dog, Shep, ran ahead, stopping at each enticing smell along the way. Jackson could direct the sheepdog with four shrill whistles: variations of one high note sliding down to low and then three high notes sent the dog to the left, right, or to his master's side, or even home to the barnyard.

Later, after dinner, George and Jackson would make sure the animals had plenty of fresh water, feed, and hay before they shut the barn up tight, carefully protecting the animals from any harm the storm might cause.

In his paddock, Jackson's powerful black stallion, Midnight, nostrils flaring with each expelled hot, foggy breath, impatiently stomped his large hoof as he waited for his dinner, a bucket of oats. The sheep in the main area of the barn finally calmed and bent down first on their knees and then flopped down on their bellies to rest on the uneaten hay strewn across the barn floor. Their eyelids drooped peacefully as they chewed whatever grain was still in their mouths, between their upper teeth and their hard, lower, toothless gums. Heavy with wool, the three dozen

animals began to steam as their moist body heat met the frigid air. And on the western side of the barn roof, crystal icicles hanging glassily ceased their dripping like a stopped clock.

Inside the farmhouse, Philip Madden stuffed another log into the parlor's crackling fireplace, keeping the home warm and pleasant for his family. In the kitchen his wife Mary began to sing in her sweet Irish voice, a lyrical song from her childhood.

"Yesterday's dreaming,
for tomorrow's autumn gleaning
is all that a young lass can do …"

Fifteen-year-old Mary Ruth Madden—affectionately called Ruthie—and her cousin, Laura Madge Ingram, visiting from her home, Holly Berry Plantation in Georgia, were decorating the fragrant, three-foot pine tree their fathers had cut and brought to the farmhouse that same snowy morning. Mrs. Madden put a sheepskin over her mahogany tilt-top side table and placed a bucket of sand on top to hold the tree.

This was only the third freshly cut Christmas tree for the Madden family. "Look here," Mary said one evening as she was reading an old copy of *Household Words*. "Charles Dickens writes that he loves the trees the German people use for holiday decorations. They cut small pine trees and bring them into the house and decorate them with sparkling objects. I think that's a charming idea."

So just as the German people practiced, so also did the Madden family.

"Mama's singing," whispered Ruthie.

"It must be that she's happy again," answered Laura Madge.

Laura Madge's mother, Claudie Ingram, came into the room in time to hear what the girls were saying. "Nothing to worry

about, Ruthie. In time, your mother is going to be fine. It's just the same old thing, and we know it will pass."

Philip stood up from the fireplace, dusting ash from his hands. "I wonder, Claudie. How long is it going to be this time?"

"Everything has been going so smoothly," Claudie said as she pushed a strand of hair back into the soft bun on top of her head. "And she seems to have eased up over the past year. I think the best thing is for her family to be patient and wait for the melancholia to lift. She has you, Philip, and this wonderful farm, and most of all she has three happy, healthy children to adore and brighten her life. I don't think there is any reason for concern."

Christmas Eve of 1860 on Galway Farm, only twenty miles north of Washington City, was the fifteenth Christmas for Mary Ruth Madden and her visiting cousin, Laura Madge Ingram. Both the girls were born in the year 1845, but Ruthie's birthday was in January and Laura Madge was born late that spring in June.

At the onset of each Christmas season the cousins waited patiently, anticipating the four short weeks they could spend together whether at Laura Madge's Georgia home, Holly Berry Plantation, or Ruthie's Maryland home, Galway Farm.

They laughed about Little Eddie, Ruthie's sometimes bothersome younger brother. The nickname "Little Eddie" was an endearment given to the eleven-year-old some five years earlier when he fell from his horse, breaking his left arm and right leg, as well as breaking his jaw. His painful broken bones failed to heal right, leaving a permanent limp. The pain of the mending jaw quickly abated his developing language.

So that Eddie would not be afraid of his horse and country riding, his father had put him back in the saddle atop his steed as soon as the little boy was able to sit again. This small but thoughtful gesture of his father's would, years later, help Eddie ride his toughest race—a race more demanding than anyone could have imagined.

By the time Eddie was ten he had become the best horseman of all the neighboring farm boys. His riding skills were second only to Jackson Jamison. He grew to love the freedom his horse could give him and relished the relief from the limp he hated so much. For many years the memory of his leg's femur bone piercing up through his skin like a bloody ghost rising from a grave would not leave his mind—causing him to wake with a heart-pounding start, his face sweaty from another dark, consuming nightmare.

That trauma left him introspective and quieted—so quiet that although he had an easy, contagious grin for everyone he met, he rarely spoke a full sentence. He was gradually becoming nearly mute.

The youngest Madden child showed growing strength in his abilities to outride, out hunt, and outwit any boy in the area with his endless endurance, intelligence, and humor. Yet Eddie had always seemed smaller than the boys his own age. His silence only exaggerated his diminutive height and increased his family's tendency to overprotect the youth. Only his brother Thomas was cautious not to coddle him and to never answer for him when Eddie was asked a question. And Thomas never referred to his young brother as "Little Eddie."

The oldest Madden child, nineteen-year-old Thomas, was a serious young man with dark brown hair and eyes. Thomas was

an intuitive and loving older sibling to his younger sister and brother.

During his seventeenth summer, Thomas had grown taller than his father and more self-assured in the knowledge of his abilities. He was ready to follow his dreams and to discover the tastes and the wonders of the world. His family was unsettled about his statements of soon going off to study at nearby Georgetown College.

Even as a young boy, Thomas was a natural scientist, bent down on hands and knees, brown locks of hair hanging forward around his face as he inspected bugs hiding in the grass or an elusive snake in the shadows under the porch. On summer evenings, Thomas hid in the barn lofts and watched the bat families hanging from the high beams begin their nocturnal movements and searches for insect meals.

Thomas gathered the examples that interested him most and added them to the collections he kept in the garden shed, where he studied two biology texts his father had brought home and presented to him as gifts. He carefully read the information written by Thomas Jefferson, pertaining to gardening practices and the effects of weather on plants. He kept precise records of the changes the seasons had on the animals.

After Eddie's traumatic fall, Thomas' interests changed to the study of human anatomy and illnesses—especially childhood traumas like the one that afflicted his young brother. Although Eddie's silence was worrisome, it also fascinated his older brother. He wanted to help his brother open up an ease of communication rather than living in the closed world in which the boy was becoming more and more content.

Despite the handicap, Eddie's brown eyes usually sparkled with an easy, ready smile and boyish mischief, capturing the affection of all who knew him. But in the last year his demeanor had saddened. This unsettled Thomas, but he could not explain to himself what it was that worried him most about his brother. He suspected his brother's faraway gaze foretold an emerging maturity, yet he anticipated that change with some trepidation.

It was Thomas who taught Eddie how to safely climb the old beech tree out by the back stream, the stream that later would be a turning point for Jackson Jamison. And one July afternoon when Thomas forgot his snagging wire back at the house, it was Eddie who taught his big brother how to snag a rabbit with the vines of the honeysuckle bush. Seeing the woodsman emerging in his young brother, Thomas gave him a leather-bound book of the inspiring escapades of Colonel Davy Crockett. Then, when Eddie climbed the big tree, he carried the book along with him to read in the leaf-dappled, afternoon light.

Not having any brothers or sisters of her own, Laura Madge always looked forward with anticipation to the festive visits in her cousins' noisy home.

Laura Madge wanted to create with words. She wanted to write poetry and lengthy novels. "I want to write important books like Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote. Her novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was … well, I just have things to say about what I think is very wrong,"

"What was that book about?"

Laura Madge's eyes glazed over like Ruthie had seen many times before.

"That book made me think about things that are not right. Things that hurt people and that are unfair."

She looked out the window, toward the setting sun and then back to her cousin. "I expect you will hear plenty from Mother about that book. Just you wait. She'll have something to say about it."

***

As usual on Christmas Eve morning, Mary Ruth's mother, Mary Madden, and her house helper, Bridget, had gotten up at the crack of dawn to begin the baking. They rolled out sugared dough on the large, well-scrubbed, wood kitchen table and cut cookies out with a tin strip folded and bent into a star shape. The cookies were then baked on large tin sheets in the big cast-iron stove. The baking cookies and the slight scent of burning stove wood filled the whole house with a delicious sweet smell.

Laura Madge tied ribbons on the stems of two pinecones and handed them to Ruthie. "Tell me what you want to be doing in ten years, Ruthie."

Stretching to get the pinecone up as far as she could reach, Ruthie said, "I will have my own sheep farm. I love those critters when they're little lambs, and how they hop and bounce around when they're only a few days old."

"Yes. They are cute, but I thought your papa wanted you to be a journalist."

"Sometimes I don't think Papa even knows who I am," said Ruthie, dabbing at a drop of sticky sap on the bottom of a cone. "I can't write. I don't even like to write things down like you do. Jackson said that Papa only wants me in the barn at lambing time if he is there. You see?"

She turned to her cousin. "He doesn't even know that about me. He thinks I'm going to be a newspaper writer, just like him. But I'm going to have the most beautiful farm in the world. I'm learning more and more about sheep from Jackson. Last fall he taught me how to nudge and push the big ram into a corner. I used to be afraid of that old sheep, but now I can get into his pen without being afraid. I do a lot of the chores around this farm, and Mr. Jamison said I was a good help to him."

Bridget brought in a tray of star cookies. "That ought to feed everybody," said Bridget as she put the tray down and wiped her hands on her apron. She pushed a curly bit of blond hair the color of wildflower honey up from her forehead with the back of her hand. "But ya better watch out for that little one. He's flying about here from wall to wall and table to table. I never did see such a thing as that little bit o' one." She rushed back to her work in the kitchen.

"What is she talking about?" Laura Madge asked.

"I don't know. Probably Eddie. He fancies Bridget and follows her everywhere."

In the kitchen, Mary and Claudie were singing a round of Irish tunes that Bridget had taught them. The laughter and song filled the farmhouse with joviality.

***

Ruthie didn't know it yet, but within hours, and then months, her carefree days and contented life on Galway Farm would be merely a memory. And like the practice piece of her cross-stitch sampler, she would seldom remember these early nostalgic days when her childish stitching and silly thoughts did

not depend on lifesaving accuracy. Nothing in her life would ever be the same again.

Chapter 2

Thomas was sitting on the stairs with Cully, talking about the meaning of freedom. "But Uncle Cully, freedom is something for everybody."

"Thomas, a black man in the North is not so much better off than those in the South."

"What do you mean? He's free, isn't he?"

"He may be free, but he certainly is not treated as a first-class citizen. He has practically no privileges, and no social standing, few rights, and what jobs does he have offered to him? He has the poorest jobs, the lowest wages, and lives in the worst dwellings. It might be argued that some slaves are better off than those free men in the North."

"Well, that would be a stretch of generalization," said Thomas, determined to discuss this with his uncle without getting angry. "If you look at food, clothing, a dwelling, and the treatment of a freeman, I guess you could make an argument for that—taking the average person, mind you, not the—"

"Right. The average slave, not some of the men that are, I admit, pitifully treated, just the average—"

"But Uncle," Thomas looked down at his hands, trying to form exactly what it was he wanted to say. "I think any man would put up with just about anything to be free."

Cully put his arm around Thomas' shoulders. "Young man, I understand what you are trying to say, but there is much more to all this than you and I can work out here today. There's the politics of the whole business, economics, and a real fundamental understanding that so many people do not have."

"I know." Thomas felt he was in too deep to argue his point further. "I sometimes feel, when I'm with you down in Richmond, that I truly am in a foreign country."

"Ha! Well, I guess you might feel that way," Cully laughed. "You just have to come visit more often."

The house was filled with the lingering smell of vanilla and spices mingled with the delicious aromas of ham roasting in syrup and baking sweet potatoes and the shy scent of the locust wood burning and crackling in the fireplace.

Ruthie stood up to tie a cookie to a tree branch, and then reached down for another. She handed it to her little brother.

"I love Christmas, don't you, Eddie?"

The family unashamedly adored Eddie. Even when he wandered far into the backwoods and forgot the time, his mother found it hard to scold the boy who smiled pure charm back at her.

In his own eyes, Eddie was not a little boy. He had for a long time wanted to prove this to his family. Soon, very soon, he would have that chance. And he would take it. The boy known to his family as "Little Eddie" would be gone from the family and Galway Farm forever.

Ruthie sat down on the sofa next to her cousin. "Jackson says I should experience one of the complicated births of a lamb—one of the births that has gone wrong. He probably thinks that will change my mind, but it won't. I haven't had a good chance to show him yet. That last bunch of lambs came without a bit of struggle."

Philip did not know of Ruthie's aspirations to have her own farm. He thought Ruthie would be the writer he could introduce to his friends and publishers at *Harper's Weekly* or the New York papers in which he had recently been publishing his work.

"You always have been a brave person, Ruthie," said Laura Madge. "I don't like barns at all. And I cannot imagine living out in the country on a farm forever. I'm much happier in Richmond during the winter, while Daddy is handling his law business."

"I even know what I will name my farm."

"What?"

"This farm, Galway Farm, was named after Papa and Uncle Ned's farm in Ireland."

"I've never met your uncle Ned, have I?"

"Papa's brother? No, probably not. He and Papa hardly ever see each other. He's the one that lives up in Maine—the one that has the textile mills. Every Christmas he sends Mama these ribbons and the material she uses to make the big bows over all the windows.

"Anyway," Ruthie said, "Papa and Uncle Ned were born in County Galway, like Granddaddy.

"Little Galway Farm. That's what I'm going to name my farm. I think this farm is the best place on earth—all the big

woolly ewes and the lambs and the gardens in the summer and the changing seasons.

"I like the changing seasons around the farm. The lambs come in early spring, along with the chicks and ducklings and maybe a new foal." Getting excited just thinking about it all, Ruthie said, "And all the work changes, too. When spring comes, the plowing and planting begin. Sap buckets get hung on the sides of the maple trees, and when the sap begins to flow the outdoor boiling begins. Syrup. I love it on just about anything."

Laura Madge said, "We boil the syrup from sugarcane stalks."

Ruthie recalled the time she stayed at Holly Berry in the fall. She remembered the metal pans of sap, over fires of sugarcane juice, boiling down to syrup, the steam coming up off the surface, and Uncle Cully snapping off a piece of uncooked sugarcane for her to chew on to get the sugary taste treat.

"Mama and I begin our garden in the spring," said Ruthie. "I eat spring peas right off the vine. Summer and fall are harvest times. Mama always plants too much. We either have too many tomatoes or too much lettuce. We dig potatoes, squash, and pumpkins for the dirt cellar in the barn. We preserve all the vegetables and fruits we will need over the winter.

"And then," Ruthie said, nearly out of breath, "during the winter months, all the farm equipment needs repair and the plows are worked on so they will be back in good shape for the coming spring. Mama and I do all the mending—I hate to mend the socks. And the underwear. I hate that, too. And we have to make new linens nearly every year.

"But the spinning! I love the spinning. I could do that all day and night—pumping my foot and watching the big wheel turn in a circle and feeling the wool spin in my fingers to form the yarn that we knit into mittens and hats. We usually begin a new quilt, to finish by February—after we mend all the quilts that need mending.

"Of course, some things go on all year long. Animals have to eat and they get thirsty as often as we do. And sometimes Papa and Mr. Jamison plan another lamb crop in there sometime before Christmas."

"Yes," said Laura Madge, "we have ongoing work on the plantation, too. It's just that I don't enjoy it the way you do, Ruthie. Sometimes I get lonely on that old plantation of ours."

"Laura Madge Ingram," Ruthie said. "that is a very pretty farm—or plantation. Up here in Maryland we just call 'em farms. But I know how neat and tidy Uncle Cully's long rows of tobacco look. It's so beautiful. How can you say you don't want to be there? Think of that wonderful smell in the barns when all the tobacco leaves are hanging up to dry. And that time Uncle Cully let us ride up on top of the picked cotton—like riding on top of big white clouds."

"You mean when he took us to the gin, the McDill's cotton gin."

"Daddy loves Holly Berry, but Mama gets tired of it all—she's always working so hard and yelling at our people, and they still never do what she tells them to do."

***

Laura Madge began to talk about her father's chapel on the pine hill at the far south end of the plantation.

"Daddy built our chapel on the most beautiful section of his land so all the neighbors could have a place to worship."

Ruthie remembered the birds chirping in the trees and the soft breezes humming through the open shutters of the chapel.

"In summer," Laura Madge said, "when the hot sun has baked the chapel's roof all day Sunday and into the evening, the tall, old trees hold their long, heavy, dark arms over the little, white building to shade and cool the church.

"In the late fall, when the wind from the Gulf Coast picks up and blows through the branches, the trees sing wind songs. Sometimes Mother brings the house slaves in for a short service. When they hear the wind, they begin to hum—low and deep in their throats. It makes Mother weep. She says it moves her to thoughts of the lost love of her mother. The wind sounds like voices. When I try hard to listen—when I concentrate—I sometimes think I hear words. I can almost, but not quite make out what the words are—along with the slaves humming and Mother rocking and weeping. I always feel I am close to something that I do not know—a presence. It can make you feel like you are being visited by angels."

When her cousin talked like this, Ruthie felt she was being told an enchanting story and she always thirsted for more when it was finished. Laura Madge talked in a way that made it all come clear in Ruthie's mind. She could envision exactly the huge trees swaying over the little church in the woods at the back of the plantation. She closed her eyes and she could hear the throats humming like tiny dark birds.

Laura Madge began to sing the quiet lullaby she had sung to her cousin for as long as Ruthie could remember. The southern girl learned the song from a dark woman who had cared for her

as a baby, and when Laura Madge sang it, Ruthie could easily slip off to sleep in minutes. And now, even as they were in their mid-teen years, she sang in her sweet voice lowered almost to a whisper until Ruthie fell off to sleep.

> "Ruthie's going to bye-low land, bye-low land,
> bye-low land. Baby's going to bye-low land … to
> see the sights so grand. Swing low … bye-low.
> Baby is going to bye-low land to see what she
> can see."

Laura Madge's eyelids, fringed with feathery lashes, lowered halfway over her darkened eyes, and soon Ruthie was far off in another land—bye-low land—safe and warm, fast asleep under the quilts.

***

She could not have known that the peaceful little chapel sitting in the morning sun and used only to give peace to its visitors would, in less than three years' time, be destroyed forever by a band of enraged and unrestrained soldiers. These Union soldiers would allow their horses to walk right into the church, hooves soiling and scarring the meticulously finished wooden floor panels. The horses would slop their bridled muzzles about after being allowed to drink from the imported Italian china fonts that Laura Madge had blessed herself from since she was a five-year-old girl.

Ruthie would never again sit on the hand-hewn pine benches. Only ashes would remain of the chapel and its contents. And soon after that, those ashes would lift and ride

away on the heavy southern breezes, leaving behind only memories.

***

But this year, 1860, Ruthie had no complaints as she enjoyed the visit of her cousin.

"Maybe now that we are older," said Laura Madge, "you can come down by yourself on the train next summer. Maybe Aunt Mary would like to come too. She used to come visit at least three or four times a year."

Something was happening between the two sisters that puzzled Ruthie. Claudie and Mary had grown up on the family farm just outside the south Georgia town of Americus, where Granddaddy still lived and farmed forty acres of vegetables and cotton.

Mary had left the farm as an eager young woman to study at the Women's Institute in Washington City, where she met and fell in love with handsome Philip Madden, a young newspaper reporter just beginning his career. They married on a chilly day in the fall of 1840, and the next year established Galway Farm.

Ruthie remembered that in years past when she and Laura Madge were little girls, the women, with their daughters in hand, had traveled into Richmond to shop for dress material. And she remembered quilting in the backyard when the Ingrams came north during the summers.

But now, something was pulling the sisters apart like the invisible pushing force of a magnet's opposite ends. It seemed to her that this was happening more this visit than ever before. It had something to do with words that when exchanged between the two women became sparks, until the sisters finally

walked away from each other—before Ruthie could hear or understand what it was all about. Laura Madge, knowing the power of words only said that it was something to do with politics, and she hated politics so she never listened. But these sparking words worried Ruthie.

From out in the kitchen came the sounds of tap, tap, tapping and knocking on wood and foot stomping.

Ruthie brightened. "They're going to do that dance!" she said.

The teenagers went to the kitchen doorway as their mothers held hands and began to dance. Philip and Cully stomped their boots and knocked on the pine worktable with wooden spoons, rhythmically and in unison. The two women grinned at each other and began to stomp out a clog dance they had learned as children.

The grown women were having fun as if they were girls again. The footsteps were complicated, yet the women kept time and stayed with each other clogging out to the rhythm their husbands were keeping. They held their skirts up and out of the way, showing their stocking legs and the lace edging of petticoats. Their cheeks were reddened, and their eyes shone with the brightness of love. They ended the dance on the same foot and on the same beat.

"Whoop! Yay!" shouted Philip.

"A fine couple of girls you are!" Cully laughed, clapping. "We might put you up on Ludolf's Entertainment stage so you can wow everyone."

"Yes!" exclaimed Philip. "You could gather all the pennies off the floor and take us to Europe next year."

Leaving the grownups, Ruthie and Laura Madge returned to the parlor and the Christmas tree, and waited for the day to slip into evening.

Ruthie had wound her long, mahogany-brown hair up in braids and red ribbons, letting wisps of curls dangle around her face. Her eyes were always bright and looking for excitement, and this evening they were especially sparkling and aleJackson Jamison was coming to dinner.

Chapter 3

Ruthie was slumped on the couch again, dreaming of lambs, while Laura Madge knitted another row on her afghan. Their mothers came into the room, each carrying a small wrapped present.

"We have a gift for you," said Claudie.

The mothers watched as the teenagers opened the muslin cloth-wrapped gifts. Each girl had been given a small, leather-bound journal with edges embossed in gold.

Ruthie opened her journal and leafed through the many empty pages with mild anxiety—so many blank pages to fill.

"Thank you," she said. Would her mother be disappointed if she didn't fill them all? Her father thought she was going to be a writer—a journalist. Ruthie only wanted to raise lambs and tend a full vegetable garden.

Laura Madge held her journal with pleasure, rubbing her thumbs over the leather. "Oh, Mother." She couldn't wait to begin filling it with words and drawings. "It's beautiful."

She opened the journal and saw the many pages she could fill with stories, poems, and secrets. She wanted to begin

drawing pictures around the edges of the pages to frame her poetry. She raised the book to her nose and smelled its leathery mustiness.

Mary sat down beside Ruthie. "We thought you would enjoy keeping journals this year."

"Yes," added Claudie. "To record the things happening in the world. And years from now, you can read the journals and remember all the things that happened that you want to remember."

"Well, anyway," said Mary. "We thought you might like to try it and see if you can keep one for a whole year. You don't have to write in them every day, but at least once or twice a week."

"For example," said Claudie, "the secession of South Carolina last week would be a good way to begin your journals. Start right out with something interesting. Who knows what will happen next? That might be a precedent for more states to secede. News. To record things like that, one keeps a journal." Claudie swallowed and flicked a tiny speck of lint from her lap.

"Do whatever you want with the book, Ruthie," her mother said. "Use it as a diary or journal or whatever—even as a place to keep lists or names of friends—whatever you want."

Ruthie asked, "Why did South Carolina leave the United States, Aunt Claudie?"

"South Carolina wanted to decide for themselves some things that the government was insisting on deciding for them. So, they left the Union."

"Like what? What did they want?" asked Ruthie.

"And Mother," asked Laura Madge, "will Georgia and some of the other states secede?"

Claudie lifted a wisp of hair from her neck that had fallen from the soft, bun of auburn hair. Claudie Ingram was a handsome woman, but not having the silky skin and soft body like her younger sister, Mary. A serious woman, she took great interest in the news she found in the papers she read daily. She was impatient with Mary's lack of interest in government. She saw her sister as a woman concerned only with her family and household.

She could not understand Mary's happiness with quilts, vegetables, and flowers, and she thought her sister devoted far too much time to her children. She didn't want her only child to grow up to be a soft-minded woman without foresight. She wanted her daughter to be a woman of substance, with education and skills.

Claudie tried to explain. "Well, what they call the Kansas-Nebraska Act. That fired the sparks, I think. That was just about the thing that I see as starting the governor and his cohorts to vote to pull South Carolina from the Union. Don't you agree, Mary?"

Mary was fussing with the Christmas tree's decorations. "I don't know, Claudie. You're more up to date on politics and things than I am."

"What act?" asked Ruthie.

Laura Madge added another row to her afghan.

Claudie said, "An act that was passed six years ago—1854, I think. The people of each territory would decide for themselves, when time for their statehood came, whether or not to allow slavery into their newly formed states."

Mary turned from the Christmas tree and took a deep breath. She sat on the rocker near the fireplace. "Ruthie, settlers

moving to Kansas from the North determined to keep their territory slave free, and settlers coming into Kansas from the South were just as determined to have slavery. You can imagine the anger between each group of settlers."

"Mary," said Claudie, "I guess you have been paying attention after all."

"Philip and I talk. I am not stupid, Sister!"

"I know you're not stupid. I just thought you were not interested. Ruthie, there's been a great deal of bloodshed between these two groups—the folks needing slave workers and the abolitionists wanting an end to slavery."

"Abolitionists?" inquired Ruthie. This conversation was becoming interesting. Whenever the talk of politics came up, which it did every time her aunt and uncle came to visit, Ruthie knew she could count on heated and spark-filled discussions in the house. She added the word to her journal.

Leaning forward to her niece, Claudie said in a low voice, "Yes. Those people who are so narrow-minded as to think they know everything. They don't want us to have even one solitary slave. Not even Lucy!"

Ruthie thought of the young girl who went everywhere with Claudie. This was an unsaid anger between Claudie and Ruthie's father, Philip. "I do not want a slave under my roof. I will not have it!" Philip was sure to bristle before every visit of Aunt Claudie and Uncle Cully. And every time, Mary soothed her husband and said she would discuss it with Claudie. But each year, Lucy arrived with the southern family.

"Without any workers," Claudie said, her voice becoming lower, "without any slaves, how do they expect us to get any work done on our plantations and farms? How do they expect

to mill their textiles without our cotton?" Claudie now was glaring at Mary. "Blasted abolitionists! How many of them have even been on a well-run plantation, do you think?"

"Claudie! Please," Mary said. "Stay calm."

Shaking her head slowly, Claudie looked down at her folded hands. "I am worried what these conflicts will do to this country."

Laura Madge put her pencil down and closed her journal, and went back to knitting. She was frightened of her mother when she talked in this manner. Although her mother was not yet angry, Laura Madge thought she might be building up to an argument. She had suffered her mother's fury before and she did not want her aunt Mary to experience it now.

"But why?" asked Laura Madge. "What does that have to do with us? What does that have to do with the South seceding—leaving the Union? Why would the South want to secede? We aren't moving to Kansas or Nebraska."

Mary looked at her sister. "Claudie? I haven't been living in the South for years, and you know the Southern sensibilities better than I."

Claudie played with her wedding ring, turning it around her finger before beginning slowly. "Well, I don't claim to be an expert. And who knows what gritty arguments go on behind the doors of those senators, but I do have an idea. I guess it's the culmination of many years of unrest—the slavery question, of course. Southern plantation owners must have workers to run the plantations. Yet, it is true that Cully is convinced anyone with any circumspection must see that slavery is on its last leg, even though many of his business friends are publicly advocating expansion of slavery to the territories.

"But slavery must be phased out in time—in the plantation owner's own time. Most important, the Southern states don't want to be told what, when, or how to do their business by people up here in the North—people who know very little about the complexities of running a large plantation. Now, with Eli Whitney's invention—that machine that picks the seeds from cotton fibers much faster than slaves or anybody else can possibly pick and without bloody and scarred fingers from the sharp, cutting bolls of the plant."

Mary got up and went to the Christmas tree to hang a tiny lamp crystal that she had been fussing with. She sat back down in her rocker and rested her head against the carved headrest. "And then the cotton gets to the customer, usually northern textile factories up here, much faster."

"To Uncle Ned's factory?" asked Ruthie.

"Probably," said Claudie. "All over the world. It's much easier to harvest cotton, and cotton is a product of which the world demands more and more. That demand causes the increased need for more help to run bigger plantations. Who is going to do all that extra work?" She ran her fingers up the back of her head, patting her large hair arrangement.

"Still," she said, "Cully says the end of slavery is within our lifetimes. But the South does not want to be told how to do their business by people here in the North."

Mary shifted uneasily in her chair. "Claudie, I don't believe all Northerners want to dictate what the South does."

Becoming impatient, Claudie said, "Perhaps that is true, but the federal government does, and to what extent do we want the federal government to dictate to us or to control the rights of citizens and states?"

"We have to have a strong government, and a union of states makes it stronger," Mary countered.

"A government should be guided by its people," said Claudie.

"Of course," said Mary. "Isn't that what a government, a democratic government like ours is?"

"But the legislators of the North are telling the Southerners how to run their farms and plantations. And I do not believe that the average Northerner understands the business side of slavery."

"Wait a minute, Claudie," Mary said, interrupting her sister.

Surprised at her mother's resistance, Ruthie opened her eyes wide and she kept her hands still.

Aware of the rise in the women's tempers, Laura Madge did not know what to do or say. There was no way to stop them. To interrupt now would be like reaching into a bee's nest.

Mary continued. "Just how do you know what the average Northerner is thinking? You don't even know any Northerners except for Philip and me. And you didn't know I even thought about anything political. Aren't you being unfairly judgmental of us?"

"Have you read *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the book by that abolitionist Yankee woman, Harriet Beecher Stowe?" asked Claudie.

Laura Madge glanced at Ruthie and mouthed the words: "I told you, didn't I?"

Mary settled into her rocking chair, calming herself. "No. Philip brought it home for us to read, but we haven't gotten to it yet. Why?"

"That woman sits up in her nice, neat, New England home, writing a book about what it is like to be a slave in the South—most of its cliché drivel."

Ruthie picked up her journal and wrote: "Be sure to ask Papa for the book, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Then write what I think about this woman named Harriet. Harriet Beecher Stowe."

Laura Madge wrote in her journal: "Ask Father to bring me a poetry book from Richmond."

Claudie said, "Stowe only tells one side of the story. You should read it. It's been out for several years. Really, Mary, you need to keep up with things."

Laura Madge saw that her aunt Mary was biting the inside of her cheek.

"What does that New Englander know about plantation life?" Claudie leaned forward and tipped her head to the side. "And by selling her book she is also profiting from slavery." Claudie sat back again as if putting a period to her sentence. "No one thinks about that!"

Growing tired of the sisters' argument, Laura Madge started to compose a poem about winter. She began by drawing snowflakes in the upper corners of the page.

Mary, irritated with her sister, said, "Oh, please, Claudie. Don't twist the issue. It was not a book that caused all this."

"That book formed many opinions," said Claudie. "The author uses the most extreme sensationalism—and it's all so unrealistic. Overly dramatic to the degree of ridiculous. Stowe is playing with the sympathies of her readers. She does not deal with the real life on a plantation."

"But," said Mary, "at least she makes people think. Philip believes, and I happen to agree with him, that the Fugitive Slave

Law had more to do with Northern sympathy than anything else."

"Fugitive Slave Law?" asked Ruthie.

"Captured slaves," Mary explained, "were to be returned to their owners. The cruel manhunts seen in northern cities and towns of course caused people to oppose slavery more and more. Philip said that Stowe's book was written in answer to those laws.

"When people began," Mary said slowly, "to see slave hunters terrifying the Negroes that escaped here to the North—the terrible way those people—mothers and children, even—had been treated, what did you expect?"

Claudie pushed up her sleeves and said, "Of course there are incidences of cruelty, and that must change. But if those tedious abolitionists would stay away—"

"Oh, Claudie," Mary interrupted, "I believe you are becoming tedious yourself. Miss Stowe's book simply presents another side to this—sensational, it may be. We have to listen to all sides if we are going to make informed decisions."

Laura Madge had never heard her aunt speak so forcefully to her sister. Aunt Mary's eyes flash with something she had not seen before.

"I just think that woman," said Claudie, who wiped vigorously at an invisible speck on her lap, "presents what Northerners think is the only side to slavery."

"And what is your side?" asked Mary.

Composing herself, Claudie smoothed her skirt as if she were clearing a slate. "I think that women in the South and the plantation owners, and you northern women and the businessmen or textile factory owners of the North, are not so

different from one another. We have been educated at many of the same schools, we read many of the same books and newspapers. We even share the same Bible. But we must deal with our slave population every day—our husbands are usually off to Richmond or Atlanta conducting business. At least, mine is.

"I have a duty to my Negroes," said Claudie. "I must constantly set an example for them. I teach them manners, cooking skills, spinning, weaving, sewing, candle making—well, I could go on and on, but you understand what I mean."

Mary did not answer. The two girls were silent.

"I never have a moment's peace," Claudie said. "I have a family that includes all the Negroes on our plantation. I do not allow anything harmful to happen to them. My overseer, Mr. Oliver, is a firm but gentle man. The Negroes never complain to me about him, nor does he complain to me about them."

"Would any of them dare to complain?" Mary said quickly. "These 'family' members of yours?"

"Oh, yes. The house servants would not hesitate," Claudie said, and laughed. "My little Lucy tells me all that is bothering her. She complains easily—even nags me. But she is happy with me. I've had her in the house since before Laura Madge was born. I have never seen any of this torture that Miss Stowe tells about in her book."

Ruthie stared at her aunt Claudie as she thought of the slave girl Lucy, who, when they visited, slept on a thin pad laid on the hall floor outside of Claudie's room. She also thought about Claudie's kitchen slave woman with the scar across her cheek, who slept on a cot beside the kitchen woodstove back in Georgia.

She also remembered her angry father one night, after the Ingrams had gone back to Georgia. "I do not want to have slaves in this house!"

And Thomas, saying, "Really, Mama. It is quite terrible. Can't we say something to them so they will at least leave the black servants at home?"

"Thomas, you have been spending too much time in Washington with your friends. This really is none of your business." Mary would then somehow calm her husband, and nothing more was said until the whole visit was only a quiet memory.

But now something was happening to Mary. She was speaking up to her older sister in a way that she never had before.

"Perhaps, Claudie," she said, "you are an exception. But remember that summer when in Richmond, we happened on the slave auction?"

Ruthie said, "I remember that slave that was for sale. He had bells and horns on a circle of iron around his head."

Laura Madge drew bird wings around an entire page. She drew swirls and circles and zeros, filling the page.

"That was so he would not try to run away," said Claudie. "He must have been a chronic runaway. They put those head irons on them so they won't run off. Cully would never allow such treatment."

No one said a word. The crackling in the fire filled the room and old Smudge stood up, stretched, and then flopped down again in a new position.

"They have to do that," said Claudie. "They have to."

"Well," said Ruthie in almost a whisper and then louder as she found courage, "I guess it must have been irritating to have bells ringing around your head day and night. And how do they sleep? How do they put their head down?"

Claudie glared at her niece. "Those bells make it impossible for a runaway to get far. The bells make too much noise for them to hide."

The four women were silent while looking from one to another. Again, no one said a word. Ruthie's eyes were wide and Aunt Claudie's eyes were narrowed. Mary looked down at her hands folded in her lap.

"All right!" exclaimed Claudie like a sudden burst of steam. "There certainly are evidences that some do not treat their Negroes well." She sighed and said, "I hate slavery. I really do. It does not bring to our plantation the many profits the North imagines. All the profits go right back into the plantation and the slaves. Yes, some farms are richer than ours, but I think ours is the average. We don't all get rich like the abolitionists think we do. Actually, Cully's Richmond law practice pays for most of the bills. And he's usually in Richmond, leaving me alone to make all the decisions. The constant responsibility is tiring."

Mary sighed and stood up. "You and I are not going to solve the problem ourselves," she said. "I'm sorry you are so overstrained. And besides, the North has its own problems with white slavery in the industries."

"It certainly does. I am glad you are the one to bring it up," said Claudie.

"I do not intend to get into that discussion tonight, Claudie. I am getting weary of all this talk," Mary said. She rearranged her sleeve cuffs and checked the safety rings in her earbobs.

She brushed her hand affectionately over Ruthie's hair. "Uncle Ned employs many people at his factory. Most are not paid decent wages and many are young children."

"Children?" Ruthie was astonished.

"Yes. And the pay he gives his employees is certainly not enough to live on. The conditions they work in are dirty and dangerous." She turned to her sister. "As I said, I do not want to get into this tonight, but I will tell you one thing more. Philip has talked to Ned many times. He doesn't want his brother to be part of something so harsh. I've never seen the factory, but Philip says the conditions are terrible. There really ought to be laws against allowing children working in such an environment. Philip will do something about it—I have faith in him."

Mary put her hands on her hips and smiled at her sister. "Now. This is Christmas Eve. Philip and Cully and the boys will be in soon to sing carols around the piano. Let's not spoil it with all this government and slavery talk. It's all we can do to keep the men from battling it out in the back feed lot." She laughed easily and went back to the kitchen to help Bridget with dinner.

Philip and Cully had been shouting at each other earlier that morning about South Carolina seceding from the Union. Mary finally sent them out to cut the Christmas tree. When they came back, they were no longer fighting and nearly jovial. Claudie said that she guessed the exercise had done them good.

Now, Claudie sat back and sighed in resignation. Her sister Mary would rarely engage in a full conversation of anything

important or controversial. And she herself felt the need to talk about this unrest in the country. For the first time Mary had begun to talk about it, but, as usual, her sister left the conversation too soon.

A strange fire of emotion rose in Claudie's chest. She thought of the things that she had forgotten to mention to further her argument. For the first time ever, she began to feel out of place in her sister's home. She secretly wished she were spending Christmas at home in Richmond or on Holly Berry Plantation. She felt almost as if she were in a foreign country with people of far different views from her own.

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The Snowy Owl, now always nearby, watched from his favorite perch high atop the old walnut tree nearest the barn roof. From his vantage point he could see nearly all the 180 acres of Galway Farm. He could see far off to the northeast corner of the farm, where Rocky Creek rushed through the back pasture. He could see the water noisily splashing over the rock pile Ruthie and Jackson had built last spring.

As the owl turned his stately head to the southeast, he saw the piney woods just before the big woods that Eddie used as a haven when he needed to be alone with his thoughts and plans.

The Snowy Owl looked back down at the Madden farmhouse. The spirited voices rose in song, oblivious to the intensifying winter storm. By eight that evening all thirteen members of the family and guests would be seated at the long oak table in the dining room.

Christmas Eve of 1860 would be the last Madden-Ingram celebration on Galway Farm.

Chapter 4

From out in the road came the jangling of brass horse bells. Eddie went to the window and then to the door and pulled it open, letting in a burst of cold air that disturbed the flames in the fireplace and rustled Smudge, the cat, from his warm place on the hearth.

Philip followed his son, calling back, "The Jamisons are here! We have enough to start the carols."

Outside in the cold, George Jamison pulled the wagon to a stop. The horses were draped with the brass bells used every Christmas. His wife, Eva, was snuggled on the board seat, wrapped in the heavy, red Indian blanket George had given her on their wedding night twenty years earlier. The nineteen-year-old twin Jamison brothers, Bobby and James, jumped down from the hay-filled wagon bed and walked up the path in their familiar identical loping strides to greet their waiting friend, Thomas. Last from the wagon was the youngest, seventeen-year-old Jackson Jamison.

"Hello, George! Eva!" hollered Philip Madden as if he had not just seen George in the barn that very morning.

He liked to show his in-laws how considerate he was with his hired farm family. George found this amusing since he had many times suffered Philip Madden's taskmaster demands.

"You've brought the whole family!"

Sometimes the Jamison twins could not be enticed to join family gatherings. But tonight, on Christmas Eve they joined their parents and younger brother. Eddie was hopping up and down with excitement and cold.

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Philip. "Come in! Come in by the fire, everyone."

Ruthie's heart beat expectantly as the Jamison family came up the front steps, stomping the icy snow off their boots. She was glad to see Mr. and Mrs. Jamison, and she knew that Thomas was happy to see his best friends, Bobby and James. But when Jackson Jamison came into the room, she shifted her high-buttoned shoes a little just to make sure she had a good footing and stuck to the floor.

The sight of him made her catch a lump in her throat, as a bird might stop singing at the very center of a note. His hair was light and a little long, reminding her of the color of wheat growing and swaying in the July sun. His smooth forehead led down to a good straight nose and blue eyes the color of a late-summer sky. She seldom dared to gaze at his lips and his ready smile showing a mouth full of strong, only a little crooked, white teeth. "Chew on a sassafras twig," he had told her when she was a little girl. "It'll make teeth taste like peppermint."

Jackson was not tall like Thomas, but built solid and strong. His legs could run and climb faster than most of the other boys. His arms were tender yet strong, and Ruthie wondered what

they would feel like around her. She had seen him carry the tiniest, newborn lamb with the gentleness of a parent.

For nearly a year, Ruthie had been aware that she loved Jackson. She had known it ever since the spring afternoon the two rode Midnight and Rosewood out to Rocky Creek at the far northeast corner of the farm. They stopped to sit on the grassy edge of the creek while the horses drank the clear water.

"I wish this creek had a noisy waterfall," Ruthie had remarked.

Jackson pushed Midnight's rump and scooted the horse over so that he would not bother Rosewood.

Midnight was a strong, stocky horse built for long rides. Jackson had raised him from a foal. Midnight was the last animal Jackson put to his feed and brushed down every night. Only Jackson's father knew that before Jackson left Midnight, he put his arms around the horse's huge neck and snuggled a quick kiss into his mane. Jackson was careful that no one, especially his brothers, saw him do this.

Rosewood was Ruthie's filly. She was a lighthearted companion for Ruthie and never gave her rider much trouble. She was known, however, to be frightened of snakes in the grass. But before rearing up she always warned Ruthie by pulling up short, going stiff, and snorting twice. Ruthie knew to tighten her legs and hold on tight.

As the riders watched their horses suck long drinks of creek water, Jackson asked, "What? Why wish for a waterfall?"

"Oh, it would sound so … so refreshing."

Jackson sat quiet for a few moments, looking first up and down the creek bed, and around behind them in the field. He got up, picked up a large rock, and threw it into the creek. The

rock made a splash and then a thurump sound as it fell to the bottom of the creek.

"What are you doing?" She laughed.

"I'm building a waterfall. If a pretty young lady like you wants a waterfall, she should have one."

He picked up another rock, bigger than the first, and threw it in. Thurump! "I could use a little help, though, don't you think?" he asked as he lifted yet another rock from the field behind her.

They spent the rest of the afternoon piling enough rocks across the creek to make the trickling noise of water over large stones. Finally, after many rocks Ruthie had blistered hands.

Jackson held her palms up to inspect the blisters. "I think these are good to have. They'll roughen up your soft skin. You need rough skin to raise sheep."

A small waterfall it was, but Ruthie had a waterfall. And Jackson was holding her hands in his. She was so happy at the sounds of water splashing over the rocks, the clear afternoon sky, and Jackson, that she laughed and impulsively gave him a hug.

Embarrassed, she stepped back quickly and just as she whispered, "I'm sorry," she slipped and fell backwards into the creek. She felt foolish with her hair dripping over her face and her riding dress soaking wet. She climbed up the grassy bank and ran past Jackson, to the horses. Sopping wet, she mounted Rosewood, pulled up the hanging reins, and galloped up the path toward home. Jackson leaped on Midnight and caught up with her halfway down the path back to the farm.

"Wait, Ruthie!" he called.

She pulled her horse to a walk, and he reached over and took her hand.

"I like you very much, Mary Ruth Madden. I like you very much, in truth—for sure. Yup. I do have fun when you are around. That's for sure. I like spending time with you."

His eyes, blue as the spring Arabis flowers alongside the creek, were kind and filled with intelligence and understanding. She felt she might fall off the horse for the spell they had over her. She could not think of what to say and if she knew what to say she was not sure her breath would carry it up from her heart and on over her lips.

Jackson and Ruthie walked their horses back to the farm. That was the day Ruthie fell in love with Jackson Jamison.

They spent the next six months riding together on Sunday afternoons and getting to know each other in a new way. No longer was she the little girl around the farm. She was now crowding out all his thoughts of packing up Midnight and leaving Galway Farm for the West. He wanted to be near her always. He watched for her each day, hoping she would come to the barn early enough for him to teach her more about caring for the flock.

Jackson and Ruthie worked well together, not having to talk for long spells while they cultivated the vegetables or mended fences or moved the flock from field to field. Jackson taught her how to direct Shep, the Border collie, with a sharp whistle in differing tones. She easily learned the knack of the whistled directions, and Shep easily took her commands.

The sheepdog was bright and intelligent and when other dogs came onto the farm Shep usually alerted Jackson in time.

Only three times in the past ten years did Shep let a wild dog get into the pasture. He was a valuable member of Galway Farm.

A thoughtful young man, Jackson knew that patience was the best way to teach Shep a new direction. And he would not rush his building relationship with Ruthie. He had not yet expressed his love to her, nor had they experienced their first kiss.

Now, in chilly December as Jackson and his family arrived for dinner, Ruthie was still as happy to be with him as she had been that spring day. It seemed to her that when he entered the room all the others vanished. She could see only Jackson. His hair was carefully combed and barely dry. He handed her a small white box.

"I hope you like it," Jackson said. "It took me a while, but I wanted to have something special for you—for Christmas. Go ahead," he said, and then cleared his throat. "Go on now. Open it up. You'll like it. I know you will."

Ruthie started to open the box, wishing they were somewhere private and quiet. The room was crowded again and filled with enthusiastic chatter and laughter of the three families. Bridget, the young Irish housekeeper, passed out mugs of hot cider flavored with sticks of cinnamon and dried mint leaves. Mary began to play Christmas carols on the small, upright piano.

Jackson ran a hand through his hair and said, "At least I sure hope you like 'em."

She pulled the top of the box off slowly so that whatever was inside would not be damaged. There were four small bundles wrapped in lamb's wool. Ruthie opened the first. A tiny

baby perfectly carved from wax was nestled in a small pine manger.

He leaned closer to Ruthie and said, "It's the baby Jesus."

He fumbled with the other bundles, helping her to open three small, carved pine figures. "His mother, Mary, and father, Joseph," he added. "And of course, a little lamb. I carved them myself."

Ruthie dared not look up at him, else he see her tears and misunderstand.

But he did see and, worried, he asked, "What's the matter? Don't you like them? Are you disappointed?"

"I love them. They are beautiful, Jackson. Thank you so much. I will treasure them all my life."

Jackson felt a tug at his shirt. "Jackson, I have a rhyme for you," whispered Eddie.

"Let's have it, little man. Let me hear your rhyme."

Eddie licked his lips and shifted his weight from one foot to the other. His eyes sparkled with pleasure.

"I'll tell you a story,

About old Mother Morey," began Eddie.

"And now my story's begun;

I'll tell you another

About her brother,

And now my story is done."

"You little monkey!" Jackson poked Eddie in the belly. "You're full of the sillies today, ain't ya?"

"Ruthie! Jackson! Come join us." Philip interrupted Mary at the piano as she played a lively Christmas jingle. "Everyone! Lift your cups along with your hearts and joyful voices for Christmas Eve, 1860."

Everyone, including Eddie with his cup of cider, complied. And everyone for the moment put aside the political unrest of the country. Even Philip and Cully stopped their talk of the ominous happenings in nearby Washington City.

Philip picked up a polished mahogany music box from the fireplace mantle. He wound a key on its bottom and as he put it back up on the mantle it played a favorite Brahms waltz.

"Mary, my dear?" he said, asking his wife for a dance. He took her in his arms, and as the box plunked off its tinny notes they slowly danced together in the center of the room while he sang to her in a soft yet clear voice.

"The pale moon was rising above the green mountain,
The sun was declining beneath the blue sea,
When I strayed with my love to the pure crystal fountain
That stands in the beautiful vale of Tralee.
She was lovely and fair as the rose of the summer,
Yet, 'twas not her beauty alone that won me—
Oh, no, 'twas the truth in her eyes ever dawning
That made me love Mary, the Rose of Tralee."

[William P. Mulchinock (1820–1864)]

Cully began to dance with Claudie, and the Jamison twins flirted with Bridget.

The foreboding storm gathering outside did not abate the joy of the holiday festivities inside.

"Merry Christmas, my darling wife." Philip kissed Mary's hand and led her to the dining room.

Cully put his arm around Claudie and they followed to the dining table.

And for the moment the three oldest boys, Thomas Madden, Bobby and James Jamison, arms around each other's shoulders, loudly singing, forgot the announcement they planned to make—an announcement that would cause fear in their mothers' hearts and uneasy pride in their fathers' chests.

"You too, Bridget," Philip called from the dining room.

The tall, young woman, rusty red curls falling about her warm and heat-flushed face, came in from the kitchen wiping her hands on her apron.

Bridget Malone came to the Madden family from the county in Ireland where the Madden family had originated—County Galway in Northern Ireland. She was a capable but sometimes distracted addition to the Madden family.

When Philip's reputation as a journalist grew, his work with *Harper's Weekly* and *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* took him away from the farm more and more often. He and Mary decided to send for one of the teenage girls recommended by the Donnelly Agency in Ireland.

The teenage Jamison twins boldly adored Bridget, teasing and flirting with her whenever they were safe in the company of many. And she enjoyed their attentions and delighted in the poetry they memorized for her. Had it not been for their quest for Bridget, neither of the twins would have learned even the poetry of a prayer.

When she came into the dining room, Bobby Jamison quoted the song their mother had taught them as boys.

"There she stands, a lovely creature,

Who she is, I do not know;
I have caught her for her beauty,
Let her answer, yes or no."

To which James added: "Madam, I have gold and silver,
Lady, I have houses and lands,"

"Oh ho, Bridget! You'll have it all now!" Thomas said, and laughed.

James continued:

"Lady, I have ships on the ocean,
All I have is at thy command."

Every eye turned to Bridget. She smiled shyly and knew they were counting on her to finish the round.

"What care I for your gold and silver," she recited.
"What care I for your houses and lands,
What care I for your ships on the ocean—
All I want is a nice young man …"
She looked at Eddie.
"With the fine dear name of … Little Edward Madden."

[William Wells Newell, c. 1850s]

The Jamison twins groaned with exaggerated suffering, and Eddie reddened with embarrassment mixed with true pleasure from her attention.

"Bridget," said Philip. "Come join us."

"But the puddings, Mr. Madden."

"Leave the puddings for now, girl. I'll not have you working in the kitchen during Christmas dinner."

Bridget sat between Bobby Jamison and Laura Madge. Philip clinked his crystal wineglass with a silver knife, calling for attention.

"Everyone, please, let us bow our heads in prayer."

The family became quiet and prayerful.

"In the name of the Father," Philip prayed, "and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Father, we thank Thee for these Thy gifts which we are about to receive. For our family and friends gathered around this table tonight, we give Thee thanks."

Ruthie was grateful for Jackson sitting across from her, down at the other end of the table. Mary was grateful that her sister was with her, no matter what her politics. Bridget thought of her mother and wondered if she were making the moist, spicy molasses bread for her father.

"We thank Thee," Philip went on, "for our bountiful table and those that worked so hard to grow and harvest it and prepare it all."

Philip grasped his hands tighter. "And Father, we pray, we fervently pray for a swift and peaceful answer to our nation's critical situation," his words spilled faster from his mouth, he wanted to get everything said— "that we may again enjoy a union of all our beloved states of America."

Cully, seated at the opposite end of the table, looked up at his brother-in-law, bile rising in his throat. Only Eddie noticed his uncle's narrowing eyelids and his jaw muscles harden as he clenched his teeth.

Philip finished with: "In the name of the Father and the Son …"—Now, both Cully and Claudie stared at their brother-in-law— "and the Holy Ghost. Amen."

At first Ruthie and Laura Madge were not aware of the rising tension between their fathers. The two men had left their chairs and stood closely facing each other in a corner of the room.

The room was filled with the ringing of glassware and clattering of serving dishes and the general noise and hubbub of a party. The four teenage boys were chattering animatedly, interspersed with occasional teasing and boisterous laughter. Bobby Jamison was showing off for the benefit of Bridget with yet another silly joke. Mary and Eva were discussing the spinning wheel Eva had broken. Claudie reached to adjust one of the three silver candelabra, each holding six of her mulberry candles that lit the room with a glow and scent of Holly Berry Plantation. Mary, as she had done each Christmas for fifteen years, had set the table with Grandmother Madden's Haviland dinnerware—white china plates with delicate pink flowers and pale green leaves. The two girls were talking about their new journals.

Ruthie looked past Laura Madge's face, to Jackson, who was listening to one of Bobby's monotonous stories. She knew he was glancing at her between stories the boys told and she could count on one of his enchanting smiles if she watched him long enough. And then she heard her uncle.

Cully seethed, "Your state of Maryland can't ever decide! You are half and half."

"It's true," Philip retorted. "It's true."

Cully's voice, loud and demanding, cut harshly through the steady hum of friendly conversation, causing the immediate silence and attention of everyone at the table.

"You have audacity, Phil Madden! I'll grant you that," bellowed Cully.

Mary immediately got up from her chair in one swift movement and went to her husband. She laid her hand on his arm, as soft as the gossamer wing of a dragonfly. He barely noticed as she guided him back to his seat and then, turning, did the same to Cully.

Arranging himself in the chair, Cully drank the last of his wine in one unpleasant gulp.

The candles dripped on, and the noisy boys stopped their chatter. Tension hung over the room like a wave of heat from a musty old quilt.

"No man I know of," said Cully, "would have brought his political idealism right into his family dinner blessings."

"What are you talking about?" asked Philip.

"And you have a captive audience right here, don't you?" Cully gestured around the table. "Whether they want to hear your opinions or not."

"What, man, are you confabulating about now?" Philip's voice grew in intensity.

"Confabulating!" shouted Cully.

"Please, dear," said Claudie to her husband.

"I, sir," shouted Cully, "am not confabulating. I know exactly what you meant during your so-called blessing. You suggested we pray for a return to a union, a union of our states!"

"Yes, don't you also?" asked Philip.

Cully's voice took on a quiet, sinister tone. "I, sir, pray for a swift and peaceful answer to our nation's critical situation—period!"

Philip leaned on the table with one arm, his other hiding a contracting fist in his lap. Deceptively calm, he asked, "Exactly what is your implied meaning, Cully Ingram?"

"My meaning, Philip, is that perhaps all of us at this table are not praying for a union as much as we are praying for an end to the encroachment of the government on our states' rights."

Philip shouted, "Sir!"

"Philip!" Mary said sharply, startled at her husband's shout.

"You, sir," Philip said, "are dangerously close to treasonous dictum!"

Mary interrupted again. "Please, Philip! This is Christmas Eve and we've prepared a wonderful dinner."

The men continued to glare at each other.

"I'll have no politics discussed at my table," Mary added. "Won't you slice the turkey for us, dear?" She sipped from her water goblet and peered over the glass rim at her husband.

Philip paid no attention to his wife. His eyes were dark as plugged keyholes and his face reddened as if he had been cooking in the kitchen with Bridget.

His voice low and raspy, he forced control, saying, "Cully Ingram, you know perfectly well that without a union of our states—a close and bound union—we cannot achieve a strong place in this world. We must be united. Strength comes from unity. It is absolutely imperative that we pursue a government for all the people—just as our forefathers wrote in our Constitution."

"Our forefathers!" Cully said slamming his fist on the table. The silverware jumped, dishes rattled and the crystal tinkled precariously.

Eddie held his water glass firmly. Laura Madge looked from her father back to her uncle. Claudie was alert, ready to support her husband's argument. No one noticed the Jamison twins glare across at their friend, Thomas. Thomas nodded to them in a barely perceptible gesture of agreement.

"Our forefathers," said Cully, "fought for independence from the overbearing government of England, exactly what is happening here in this country less than one hundred years later."

"And our forefathers," said Philip, his voice still low and controlled, "also fought for the ideal that all men were created equal. Obviously, slavery is in direct conflict with that!"

"Enough!" Cully stood up abruptly, his chair toppling over backwards behind him.

The other diners were silent. Wide eyed, startled guests around the table did not move or say a word, only looking back and forth from Philip to Cully.

Cully ran his tongue over his dry lips. He leaned forward and put both hands on the table, his voice low and tense: "Are you an abolitionist, Phil?"

"Perhaps I am," answered Philip, raising his chin. "That is my business."

Claudie's back stiffened.

Still standing and glaring at his brother-in-law, Cully seethed with anger. He said, "I hope for all this family's sake, all the people at this table, and for the sake of all the families in the country gathered together tonight for Christmas Eve—I

fervently hope that this argument does not develop into what I am desperately afraid of …."

"Yes?" Philip asked, leaning back in his chair. His tongue sought out a back tooth, making a strange sound, as if he were sucking on something unpleasant. "And just what is it you are afraid of, brother-in-law?"

Cully threw his napkin onto his plate. "You ought to be afraid too, for this argument may well develop into a conflict much worse than you have obviously imagined." He stood erect and pointed a finger down at his brother-in-law at the other end of the table as if warning a possible adversary from coming any closer into his territory. "A war, Philip Madden. A war between the northern states and the southern states."

"Cully!" said Mary.

Between clenched teeth, Cully added, "A war between you and me. And a bloody war it would be—you would soon see at what heights the South holds her sovereignty, her states' rights, and her glory dear to her heart."

He turned stiffly to Mary. "I am deeply sorry for this ruin to your fine dinner, Miss Mary. I am truly regretful not to have delighted in the culinary treats you have prepared. We will be leaving first thing in the morning."

He turned to his wife. "Claudie? I shall now retire to our room. Please stay here and enjoy your sister's company as long as you like."

He left the table and only his footsteps up to his room and the closing door behind him were heard. There was still quiet at the table. Eddie took a sip of his water.

Claudie began to get up from her chair. "No! Please, Claudie," Mary said, "it's Christmas. Please don't let this happen. Talk to him. Make him stay. Make him understand."

Slowly, Claudie dabbed her napkin at her lips with controlled anger, and then carefully folded it and placed it on the table beside her plate. She arranged her silverware piece by piece on her plate so that it would not slip when the dishes were taken from the table.

"This Christmas is over for us," said Claudie. "We will 'shake the dust from our feet' and return to Richmond tomorrow. I believe we will find a friendlier atmosphere back in Virginia and Georgia." She left the table to join her husband upstairs.

"She's quoting Matthew again," said Philip.

Frightened and embarrassed by the argument, Ruthie could not bring herself to look at the Jamison family. Her mother and father, deep in thought, both stared at the golden candle flames and dripping wax. No one moved.

"Mother? Father?" Thomas was the first to speak. He looked at each parent until they became aware of his voice. "I guess this is as good a time as any for the twins and I to make our announcement." It was hard for him to arrange the words he wanted to say. He unnecessarily cleared his throat. "Mama and Papa,"—he called them by the childhood names he had used many years before—"we also are leaving in a few days."

"What?" George Jamison said to his sons. "What is he talkin' about?"

With a proud and toothy smile, Bobby Jamison said, "Lincoln is going to need a passel of volunteers, Pop. We're all going to join up next week down in Washington."

"Oh, no!" Mary's voice betrayed her fears.

"Mother." Thomas leaned across Eva Jamison and put his hand on his mother's arm. "I will be able to work with the Army physicians. When I return, I'll be ready to enroll in Georgetown College in Washington, and I'll have had plenty of practical experience for all my medical classes. It's really what I want.

"Father?" He looked at Philip. "There are going to be casualties and injuries wherever an army goes. Things are precarious at best down at Fort Sumter. You know that." His voice changed to a whisper, demanding, "You heard Uncle Cully. You know how he feels. How many more southerners feel like he does? And you know this is only the beginning. You know it. We can all hope nothing happens—that there are no outbreaks and, if there are, we can only hope they will be small and contained. But there are surgeons traveling with the Army and I want to go with them."

Philip rubbed his right hand back and forth over his mouth and tapped his left-hand fingers on the table. Thomas received a slight smile from his father, but he was not altogether sure of the meaning.

"Philip?" Mary wanted her husband to end this talk.

George Jamison wiped his mouth and put his napkin down. "Perhaps this is a good idea," he said.

"George!" Eva protested.

"Now, Eva, just listen." He looked at Philip. "You know, Phil, the larger an Army we have, the less apt the South will be to engage in a civil war."

"That is probably true," said Philip, his slow and thoughtful voice nearly inaudible.

Mrs. Jamison sighed in resignation. She had never won an argument with the twins and their father. She was not going to try now.

Jackson was angry. His brothers had not confided their plans to him. He felt left out, but he did not have any intention of asking to join them. He did not care a lick about politics. He could only think of the miserable job of trimming sheep hooves next week. And how could he leave when the farm was expecting a lamb crop in a few weeks. He looked at Ruthie, her eyes red with the threat of tears. He would stay right here on Galway Farm and leave all the half-witted soldiering ideas to his brothers.

No one noticed Laura Madge slipping from her chair and leaving the room to join her parents upstairs.

Mary Madden wiped her tears with her napkin.

Christmas Eve dinner, 1860, had ended unhappily and fearfully for all three families at Galway Farm.

***

Later that evening, when the Jamison family had long gone home, Galway Farm quieted. After the dining room had been cleaned up and the kitchen put to rest and the next morning's cooking supplies put out on the table, Bridget wrapped herself in a heavy, woolen shawl. She went out the back door, sat on the porch steps, and hoped for a few stars to watch. Her mother had sent her off from the house with the words, "Come one dark evening when ye want to see your mother, just look into the sky and see what I see and sure we'll be together."

Then Bridget waited for Thomas.

Eddie was peacefully asleep in his bed alongside his brother's bed. The light had long been extinguished in Claudie and Cully's room. Mary and Philip, having gone to bed, held each other in their own darkened room. Ruthie and Laura Madge were still awake and were taking turns brushing each other's hair in preparation for bed.

"I'm sorry," Ruthie said.

"Why? It was my parents as well as yours."

"I know. But I'm still sorry. I'm sorry for everybody."

She ran the brush easily through her cousin's long, blond hair. Ruthie felt anxious, as if something worrisome was about to happen.

They were not sure at first that they had heard something at the door. Ruthie stopped brushing. Then another knock.

She opened the door to Thomas. "Ruthie, get on your slippers and robe. Come down the stairs—I have something to talk to you about."

He did not intend to tell her what he and Bridget and the twins were about to do, but he did want to soothe his sister's worries.

She followed her brother halfway down the steps, to the landing where the old clock incessantly ticked away the hours. They sat on a step together in the dim glow of the oil lamp mounted on the wall.

Thomas, at nineteen, knew his life's dream of being a physician would be difficult, but he was determined to follow that path. He wanted to heal wounds and treat diseases. His days were already filled with the science of life. Now on the verge of adulthood, he busied himself with every book of science and medicine he could find.

"Ruthie," Thomas said quietly, "I saw at dinner that you were upset at what the twins and I announced."

"Everything said at dinner worries me," she said.

"I understand how you would feel like that, but this was all bound to happen. You know Father and Uncle Cully have been disagreeing about this states' rights thing for years. It's been around us for a long time."

"It has?"

"Well, I mean the political part of it has been hashed around in Congress and on the Senate floor with no reasonable solution. At least the politicians don't think anything can be solved. It's a matter of 'you do as I say because I'm right and you're wrong' kind of argument." Thomas held her hand. "Ruthie I will miss you most of all, I think."

She looked down at the celluloid-handled hairbrush in her lap and rubbed her thumb over the bristles. "Do you have to go, Thomas?"

"You must not worry about me. I want to gain as much experience as I can. I'm going to do whatever doctoring I can and I expect that will be plenty. Most armies suffer disease as much as battle wounds. I won't be around the fighting—if there is any fighting at all."

"What do you mean?" she asked. "Why won't there be much fighting?"

"The politicians and the generals might just see how dangerous all this bickering could amount to, and if they do, they'll go back to their state governments and try to find answers. I'm not at all interested in all that. I just want to be in the right places at the right times. I want to be where the best doctors are so that I can become acquainted with physicians

that can recommend me to the teachers at Georgetown College."

Thomas put his arm around Ruthie and held her tight. He loved his sister. They had a close relationship, not suffering the sibling problems of most brothers and sisters. He felt very protective of her well-being.

Ruthie thought he understood her better than her parents.

He stared into the darkened stairway, forming his thoughts carefully before looking back at her.

"What I wanted to tell you tonight is that I am very proud of you." He saw that her eyes were filling with tears. "You are developing into a fine young lady, caring and helpful to your mother and family. I'm counting on you to watch over your little brother. I'm concerned about him. You know, sometimes he doesn't let anyone know when he is afraid or when he needs something answered. He would rather stay in his closed, quiet world. And Mother. She's finding it hard to see her family change. She's a sensitive woman, Ruthie. She needs your strength. Please always take care of her.

"And one more thing. You are intelligent and inquisitive. Later tonight, you may see or hear something that you do not understand and then you will have to keep your silence—your absolute silence."

She thought he was referring to the dinner earlier and did not ask what he meant by the last sentence. She looked into his darkened eyes and saw the reflecting flickering of the oil lamp.

"I don't feel like a young lady, Thomas. I sometimes feel like such a child. Mother still won't let me do the important household chores—I do the hemming, but she always does the darning. I do the carding of the wool, but she always does most

of the spinning. She won't let me near the cookstove—just because of that little fire last summer. I got the flames out before the biscuits burned. She didn't have to carry on so.

"And Papa. He still treats me like a little girl. He does not even know the true me." She pulled her hand from her brother's and turned to face him. "Thomas, he won't even listen to me when I tell him I want to have a sheep farm when I grow up. He doesn't think I'm serious."

"Parents," he said, "are always going to be like that, Ruthie. Mother still doesn't understand me either. Yesterday she tried to talk me into law school. She said she worried that medical school would be too difficult for me."

"You see?" she said. "Now you see what I mean?"

"We'll always be their children," he said. "We have to prove to them that we are capable adults. And you may have that opportunity sooner than you know."

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"Just know, Mary Ruth Madden, what I'm explaining to you is that you are following the path to adulthood just fine. You know what is right and you know what is wrong. Always ask yourself that and you'll be confident that you can take or give the lead to any horse you ride."

"Any horse?" she asked.

"I mean, you will be able to make decisions on your own, confident that you are doing the right thing." He was quiet for a while and then he held her hand again.

She looked at his strong hand, so much bigger than her own, and remembered the careful drawings he made in his science notebooks; flowers and grasshoppers, leaves and beetles, and the skeleton of a rabbit he found down by the

creek. As he got older the skeleton drawings were of the human hand and foot, or the muscles of the leg or arm. She noticed again how angular and masculine his fingers were and she remembered how he used his hands to express himself with wide gestures and his fingers to show little examples.

"Listen to me carefully, Mary Ruth," he said. "You are like a chrysalis. You'll be spreading your wings and flying away to your own life's adventures very soon—your own life and your own family. And then you will also be a parent with all the problems that parents have."

"A chrysalis?" she asked.

"A chrysalis—when a butterfly or moth hangs from a silk pod by just a delicate thread and is enclosed,"—he cupped his hands to demonstrate the shape—"in a hard, little shell-like covering, similar to a cocoon waiting to open into the world."

He opened his hands as if letting a monarch flutter off into the air.

"I think of you, Mary Ruth, in this quiet, expectant stage. You're on the verge of breaking out of your own chrysalis—as a beautiful, productive young woman. Mother really knows you're no longer a little girl. She's just afraid of losing you to the grownup world too soon. Who knows," Thomas said, hugging his sister, "perhaps by the time I return, you'll already have become a lovely, golden butterfly."

"Thomas, I'll make you proud. And you wait. When you come back, I'll be flapping my wings, ready to fly anywhere."

She tiptoed a few steps before turning as if she forgot something. She stepped back down the steps and hugged her brother tight around his neck. "Good night, Thomas," she whispered. "I love you."

He took her by both shoulders and narrowed his eyes as he looked directly into her eyes. "Remember. The chrysalis."

She tiptoed up the stairs again and at the top landing she looked down the dark, lamp-lit hall. She saw Lucy, the slave girl, asleep on her cotton pallet outside Aunt Claudie and Uncle Cully's door. But as Ruthie moved toward her own door, Lucy's eyelids fluttered open and she leaned up on her elbow and looked at her. Ruthie stopped and looked at the girl, only a year older than herself. She walked over to Lucy.

"Are you comfortable?" Ruthie whispered.

Lucy nodded, smiled a friendly grin, and lay back down. Ruthie smiled back, and seeing the girl's bony shoulders turning on the pallet, seeking a comfortable position with her head flat on the scant bedding gave Ruthie an idea. She went into her room and without waking Laura Madge, she took an extra pillow from the bed. She went back out to the hall, knelt down, and tenderly lifted Lucy's head and then placed the pillow under her.

"Is that better?" she whispered.

"Yes, Missy," Lucy said. Her eyes brightened and her mouth opened in a wide grin, showing large, white teeth and pink, moist gums.

"I's gone have a baby," Lucy whispered, and then covered her mouth as if she had just told a secret.

"Oh! Oh my," Ruthie said.

She stood and looked down at Lucy for a minute. The girl was covered with an old shawl and an adequate blanket. Ruthie turned and went into her room again, returning with a woven wool blanket, and covered Lucy carefully. She tucked the blanket around the girl, then turned and again went into her

room, returning with a quilt. She covered Lucy with the coverlet and, as before, she tucked the quilt around the girl, making sure she was covered all the way up to her dark chin. Ruthie wondered what it would be like for a young girl like herself to have a baby.

Lucy whispered, "Thank you, Missy."

"Good night, Lucy. See you in the morning."

Ruthie tiptoed back to her own room.

Lucy again lifted herself to her elbow. Her eyes narrowed as she whispered, "Not me. No, you wone see me in the mornin'. I be long gone. This baby is gone be born free as the redbird."

Laura Madge, now awake, was sitting up in bed, looking into a hand mirror. When Ruthie entered the room, she lowered the mirror. Her eyebrows were wrinkled over bright eyes and her mouth was wide enough to see her throat. She was making a choking sound.

"What's the matter?" asked Ruthie. "Are you choking? Laura Madge!"

Laura Madge closed her mouth for a few moments, and then whispered, "I am afraid of something I know nothing about. I feel like I'm choking. My fear is stuck in my throat like a tuft of wool."

Ruthie went to her dressing table and got a pen. She opened a jar of ink and pulled out the chair. "Here." She held out Laura Madge's journal. "Come write it all down. Make a poem."

Writing long into the evening while Ruthie slept, Laura Madge filled page after page with all the things she was thinking about. Ruthie's soft snoring did not disturb her writing, and soon Laura Madge gave up the fear and worry for her family to the page and her written words.

Thomas had not left his place on the lower landing. He had heard Ruthie and waited for his sister to go to her room for the last time. He waited nearly an hour before he stepped up the stairs, skipping every other step, as quiet as a cougar advancing to save her cub. He noticed the light under Ruthie and Laura Madge's door, but listening, he heard nothing.

Laura Madge was so involved with her journal that she did not hear Thomas come up the stairs.

"Are you ready, Lucy? It's time. The Jamison brothers are waiting for us with the wagon."

He helped the girl go quietly down the steps. He was not afraid; nor was Lucy. They crossed through the dining room into the kitchen, where Bridget was waiting with a basket of leftover turkey, bread, and a covered jar of milk. Bridget wrapped a heavy knitted shawl around the girl's small shoulders.

She hugged Lucy and said, "May you be on a safe journey, little one, and may your baby be born alive and well in a friendly home in the north country of Canada."

Thomas lifted Lucy into the back of the Jamison's' wagon. He made a nest for her in the hay and thin blankets, finally piling three sheep pelts over her.

James Jamison called back, "Hurry up, Thomas. Ya want all of Maryland to be comin' after us?"

Quiet, happy, and trying to be quiet, Lucy began to sing just past her throat:

"Little black sheep, where's yo lam'
Way down yonder in de meado'
The bees an' de butterflies
A-pecking out his eyes

The poor little black sheep
Cry Ma-a-my."

Bridget waved at the wagon vanishing up and over the hill, into the cold, dark night.

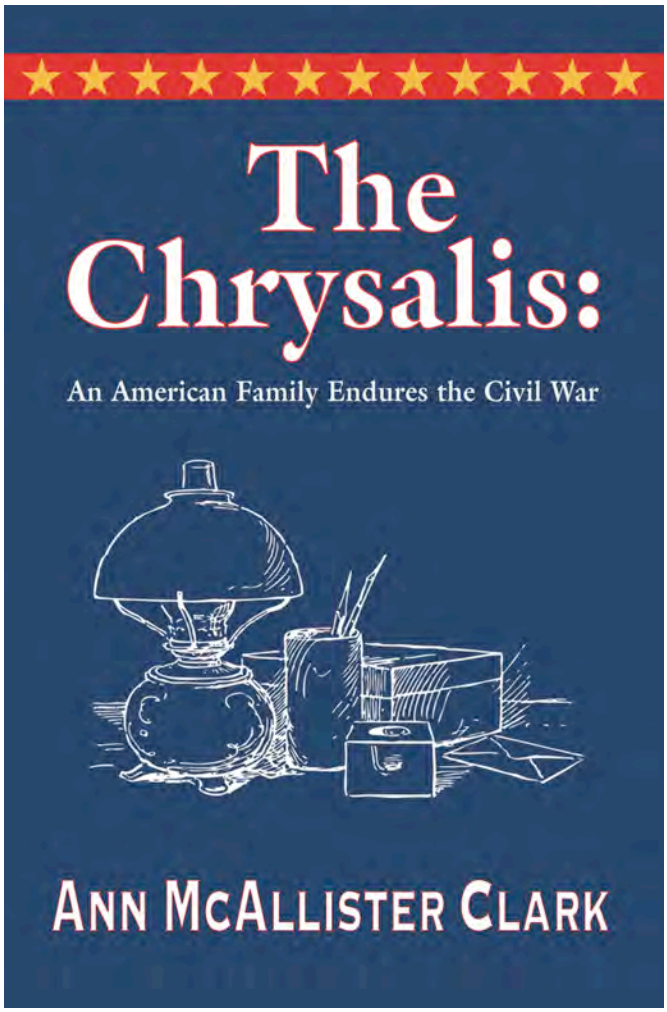
***

Christmas Eve 1860 on Galway Farm ended outwardly calm. Bridget turned down the oil lamps and left one to burn low all night long. Inside the farmhouse the families slept fretfully.

The ever-present white Snowy Owl gazed expectantly—always ready for its careless prey.

About the Author

A graduate with a BA in Education from charming Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Ann McAllister Clark, author of the award-winning novel, *A Bone in Her Teeth, A St. Augustine Mystery*, and *Morgan's Redemption*, the first book in the Morgan's Bridge, Michigan Series, is a teacher, journalist, and former used bookstore owner. She now lives and writes in a small cottage in the Nation's Oldest City, St. Augustine, Florida.



Northern families separated from southern relatives by a Civil War. Battlefield and survivor journalism, Mathew Brady photography on battlefields, nursing at battlefields, families trying to maintain their farming and incomes during a War.

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