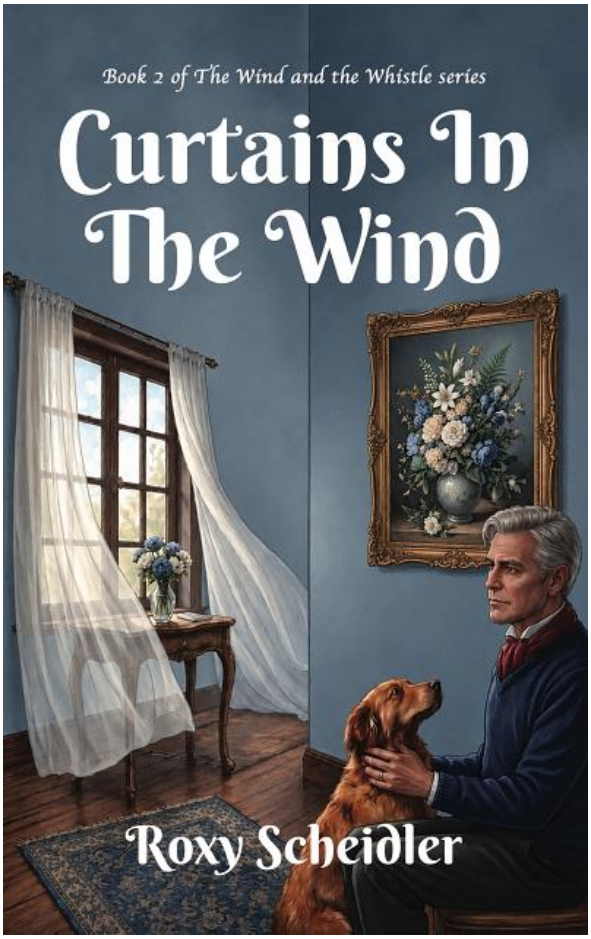


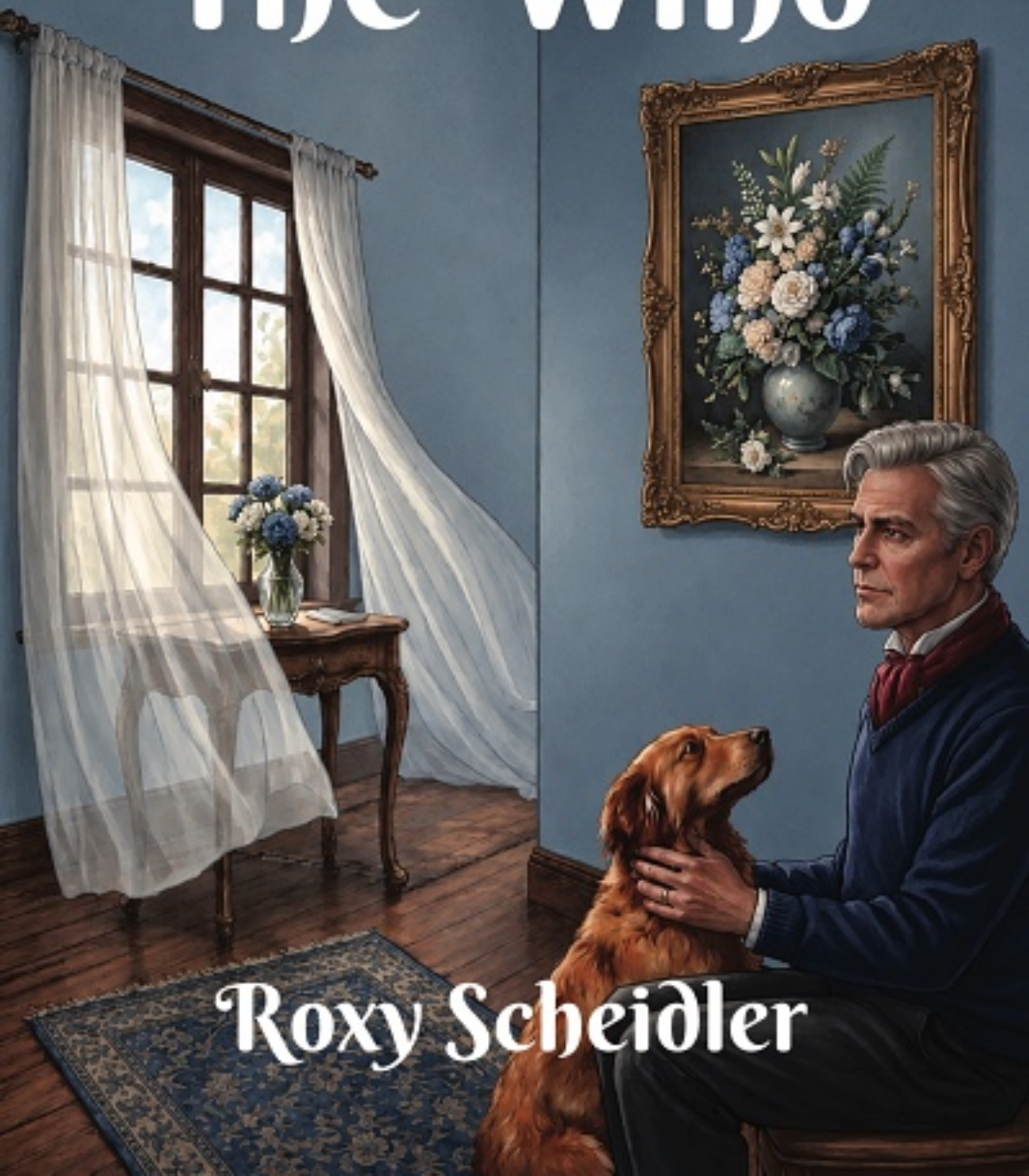
Butterflies, Spilled Milk, A Whistle and A Burglary - What more is in store for the Lawrence Elliot Maple family in Book 2 of The Wind and the Whistle series?

Curtains In The Wind
By Roxy Scheidler

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Book 2 of The Wind and the Whistle series

Curtains In The Wind



Roxy Scheidler

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Chapter Two:
THE MAPLETON NEWS

"Chill air and wintry winds!
My ear has grown familiar with your songs."
-Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

No one in the Maple family slept well that night. All were very concerned about the winter storm as well as the burglaries. The wind blowing in their bedrooms kept Lawrence, Stephanie and Amy awake and even Lucky was up and down all night as he first slept near the warm fireplace and later by the stairs after the fire had burned out.

More than once Lawrence Elliot Maple had heard the poor dog whining. Lucky didn't like the frightening sound of the wind, but the dog couldn't climb the stairs any longer. Lawrence had quickly decided they really did need the old dog downstairs to alert them, if by chance there could be selfish burglars trying to get into the Maple house tonight.

At the Evans house across the street, poor Cousin Simon too was awake for most of the night. Most of that time was to comfort his wife Jo Anne who was very angry with him. Simon Maple Evans wasn't quite sure why that was and he wasn't for certain his angry wife knew either.

Simon got up often to look out the front windows of his house, checking on his cousins as well as watching the storm carefully. He was ready to run across the street if needed, although he was certain his wife would be madder than ever to find him gone. The man sighed as his wife cried. It was going to be a long night. For the sake of his family on both sides of Maple Street, Simon must stay awake if possible.

Early the next morning, Stephanie Ruth Maple walked downstairs quietly, finding herself not wanting to spend any more time trying to sleep through the gusts of cold wind coming through her bedroom windows.

Lucky was awake at the bottom of the stairs and seemed very happy to see her and she patted the old dog on his head. Quite unexpectedly, she found that the fireplace hadn't burned out at all in the night. It was very easy to get a nice roaring fire started quickly which pleased the happy dog. He laid down close to the fire and promptly began snoring.

Stephanie started the coffee quickly and looked around the spotless kitchen and smiled. No burglar had come into their house in the middle of the night. It was something to be thankful for. The girl was very tired from her lack of sleep, but she could relax now knowing they were all safe and the fire in the fireplace was once again warming the house.

The winter winds coming through the kitchen windows sounded like a song this morning. The girl stopped and listened as she drank her first cup of hot coffee. There was always beauty around in some way, if you just stop for a moment or two and look for it. Sometimes, the wind did indeed sound just like someone

singing a sweet song. It was easy for the girl to imagine when she lived in such an old house.

Stephanie was very surprised to see both her Great-Grandpa Lawrence and her cousin Amy come quietly through the swinging kitchen doors. Lucky did not follow them this morning. The old dog was happily sleeping by the warm fireplace and wasn't moving.

Everyone began sipping their hot black coffee and nobody mentioned breakfast at all. It was just too cold in the kitchen. The girl was very anxious and she hoped her great-grandfather wouldn't become upset as he waited for his newspaper.

Stephanie walked carefully through the squeaky, swinging kitchen doors and into the living room and looked out the front door. There was no sign of a newspaper.

Lawrence Elliot Maple and Amy Ruth Maple had followed Stephanie into the warm living room. Lucky was sleep peacefully by the fireplace. Amy was glad he wasn't sleeping at the foot of the stairs this morning. The girl was tired of tripping over the poor old dog. She was also very happy that there were no classes scheduled for her at college on a morning such as this.

Amy felt like crying but she sat down on the couch and waited for the newspaper to come. The family must be ready.

Great-Grandpa Lawrence was deep in thought. Stephanie knew how much he enjoyed his newspaper, but he didn't appear to be upset that the paper was late.

The grand old house was silent except for the occasional gust of wind from the storm outside. Everyone was startled when the

doorbell rang unexpectedly. Amy hurried to the door and looked through the window. She could barely see the face of Mr. Jones as he smiled at her. She opened the door. The wind and snow started blowing into the house as the man tried to catch his breath.

"Sorry I am late. I thought I had better give you the newspaper myself. I was afraid it would blow away if I just left it on your porch. This snowstorm is a bad one." Mr. Jones smiled and handed Amy the newspaper. The wind was fierce. Before the girl could say thank you, he had turned around and was gone from the porch and out into the snow again.

Amy handed the newspaper to her cousin immediately. Stephanie began reading the paper aloud to her great-grandfather. The man liked his great-granddaughters to read the Mapleton News to him.

Great-Grandpa Lawrence was quiet as Stephanie read the paper. The old windows in the old house rattled loudly. He listened to the news about the weather closely at first, but soon his mind began to wander.

The man's great-granddaughters could see him shiver now and again, but they didn't realize he wasn't shivering because of the cold.

Lawrence Elliot Maple was remembering the blizzard of long ago and of searching everywhere for Ruthie. To this very day, it still made him shiver. The man blinked and tried to clear his head. He must try to keep his senses.

The man’s great-granddaughters were worried, and he must listen carefully to what Stephanie was reading.

Lawrence wasn't at all worried, but he must be ready.

Amy was cold, and the girl was sniffing. It wasn't from the cold air and the wind whistling through the old windows. She was trying hard not to cry. The girl didn't want to upset her great-grandfather and her cousin. She knew they were worried, too.

They would also be wondering what to do. They were all thinking things through in their own minds. Only the old dog Lucky seemed completely content as he slept peacefully by the warm fireplace.

Amy wanted to go to bed and hide under the covers, but she sat in the living room and listened as her cousin read the newspaper.

Stephanie was thoughtful as she read the news about the snowstorm. It was so early in the year. Suddenly, the girl was shivering so much she had to stop reading the newspaper altogether.

We have to get these old windows fixed, Stephanie thought to herself as the wind gusts blew the curtains in the living room. This is ridiculous! I will just have to insist that we get new windows or fix the old windows. Why is my great-grandfather so stubborn?

Stephanie Ruth Maple looked at the man and sighed. Was he even paying attention to her at all as she read about the storm? The girl didn't know, but she kept reading.

Suddenly, Amy couldn't stand it any longer. "Stephie, can we skip all the other news and just go to the news about the burglaries? Cousin Simon told us about them."

"Of course. It's right here below the information about the snowstorm. Four Houses Burglarized on Walnut Street. That's not far from here is it, Great-Grandpa Lawrence?" Stephanie asked.

Lawrence Elliot Maple didn't hear her. The man seemed to be deep in thought. The girls wondered if he could be upset about the snowstorm, or could he be thinking about the burglaries? Perhaps, he was simply daydreaming about his Ruthie.

Most of the time, Stephanie and Amy had no idea what their Great-Grandpa Lawrence was thinking about at all.

Amy Ruth Maple didn't wait for her great-grandfather to answer. "I would imagine if we had burglars in this house, that dumb old dog would sleep through the whole thing. Burglars in Mapleton! It's all giving me the shivers." The girl was still trying hard not to cry.

Great-Grandpa Lawrence was brought back to reality. "I'm sorry Amy, did you say something?" The man was daydreaming about his wife and had paid little attention to the story of the snowstorm or the story of the burglaries in today's newspaper.

"Stephanie asked if Walnut Street is near us? That is where the four burglaries happened. Where is Walnut Street?" Amy asked her great-grandfather impatiently.

"Walnut Street, let's see. If I remember, that's where the Andersons live. Is that right, Stephanie? I went to school with the Anderson boy, but I can't remember his name. I think that's where Walnut Street is. It's where the Andersons live." Lawrence looked at Stephanie confidently.

Stephanie smiled. "I don't remember any Andersons in Mapleton. Maybe that was before my time, Great-Grandpa Lawrence."

Turning to her cousin quickly, Stephanie answered, "I believe Walnut Street is where the Jenkins family live. It's about four blocks from here. Amy, you remember their daughter Dianne. The Jenkins family live in that big old house with all the pretty lawn furniture. The one we used to ride our bicycles by years ago, and their big old cat liked to chase us! Mrs. Jenkins plants all those beautiful flowers around their house.

"I hope the burglars didn't rob them. Mrs. Jenkins is such a nice lady. I remember her coming into the hospital a lot, but I can't remember who was ill at the time."

Stephanie set out some kerosene lamps on a table in the living room. "I hope we don't lose electricity, but I think we should be ready for that tonight. This may turn out to be quite a snowstorm." The girl sighed. The family turned to the fireplace and the dog sleeping peacefully by the fire. The fire was cheery.

Everyone continued thinking their own thoughts. The howling of the wind was getting worse. They all looked at each other occasionally but said nothing.

Suddenly, Amy startled the others, "Burglars wouldn't be out robbing people in a snowstorm, would they?" No one said anything. They were all thinking about the burglars now. They had to be ready.

Stephanie was thoughtful. The girl really didn't know if she could count on her great-grandfather to make a good decision if

burglars really did get into the house. The girl shivered, and this time it was because she was frightened.

She knew she couldn't count on Amy. Even now, the poor girl was looking as if she could start crying at any moment.

Stephanie knew it would be all up to her. The girl couldn't depend on them at all. She must think this through carefully by herself. The girl looked at Lucky as he slept peacefully by the fire. She sighed.

I don't believe Great-Grandpa Lawrence or Amy or even Lucky would wake up if we had burglars in the house, the girl thought to herself. Perhaps that would be a good thing, she had quickly decided.

Stephanie Ruth Maple looked at the three of them and smiled.

Amy needed to say something. She had to, or she would start crying. The girl didn't want to upset anyone, but she thought the family should have a plan.

"What should we do if the burglars come here?" Amy said as she looked at Stephanie who was still thinking about that herself. They each looked at Great-Grandpa Lawrence for some comfort, but they were not to get any. He was deep in thought and hadn't heard Amy at all.

"What do we do if the burglars should come here?" Amy said loudly as she stared at her great-grandfather. He looked at her curiously.

"Did you say something to me, Amy? I was thinking about the burglaries. I'm sorry, Amy-girl!" The man looked at his precious

granddaughters and sighed. Lawrence knew it was all up to him, and he had to be ready.

"Great-Grandpa Lawrence, we are wondering what we should do if the burglars come here. I think we need a plan. What should we do?" Stephanie asked.

Lawrence Elliot Maple stared at his great-granddaughters. They meant the world to him. He sighed and thought about the burglars. How selfish they were! What right do they have to break into people's houses and steal their possessions? The man felt anger inside. His eyes blazed as he thought of anyone who would frighten his dear great-granddaughters.

But quickly, he came to his senses, and the man found himself smiling as he looked at their poor frightened faces. They were looking to him for comfort. They were looking to him for help.

"Great-Grandpa Lawrence, we need a plan. What should we do?" Amy asked and she began to cry quietly.

"Lay down and play dead, of course!" Lawrence Elliot Maple said as he walked slowly into the kitchen to get another cup of hot black coffee. The swinging kitchen doors squeaked loudly, and the man frowned at the sound.

Stephanie and Amy looked at each other with wide eyes.

Amy started bawling. Stephanie felt like crying, but she didn't. They both knew that their Great-Grandpa Lawrence had completely lost his mind.

"Do you think I should call Dr. Forrester, Amy? We have to do something. I am afraid my nerves cannot handle our great-

grandfather and the storm, too.” Stephanie quickly followed her great-grandfather into the kitchen.

Amy came walking in slowly behind her. The poor girl was hysterical and would certainly be no help to Stephanie at all.

Great-Grandpa Lawrence got his cup of hot black coffee and sat down at the big old kitchen table. He smiled as the girls came in. "Will you have coffee with me, girls?"

Stephanie and Amy stared at their great-grandfather. The man was relaxed. He seemed to have all his senses. He also seemed to be in good spirits. What was going on with him?

"Great-Grandpa Lawrence, do you think I should call Dr. Forrester? Is the storm upsetting you?” Stephanie asked as she watched him carefully.

"Why would you be bothering the good doctor, Stephie? Doctor Forrester is a married man now, and I most certainly do not want to see him and Lorraine out on a day such as this!" Great-Grandpa Lawrence looked at Stephanie with a surprised expression. For the first time, he noticed that Amy was crying. "Aren't you feeling well, Amy- girl?" he asked curiously.

Stephanie looked at her great-grandfather and sighed. Amy stared at her great-grandfather and started sobbing. Lucky came quietly into the kitchen and walked over to where the man was sitting. The dog curled up by his feet.

Lucky was always happy when he was with Lawrence Elliot Maple. The old dog quickly went back to sleep and started snoring again.

"I wonder if we should take Lucky to the veterinarian again. The poor old dog can't breathe." Lawrence spoke quietly as he reached down and patted the dog. "Lucky's getting old now. I know how you feel, boy."

Stephanie and Amy looked at each other and didn't say anything. They got themselves some coffee and sat down quietly at the big old oak kitchen table. The hot black coffee was the perfect way to calm everyone's nerves. The wind was howling, and the curtains were blowing in the kitchen, but no one seemed to notice or care.

They calmly sat at the old kitchen table and didn’t say a word. Suddenly, the lights in the kitchen started to flicker, startling everyone.

Lucky started whining. The old dog didn't like storms. He tried to climb closer to Lawrence, but he was already lying on the man’s feet. Soon the lights stopped flickering. They all breathed a sigh of relief.

Stephanie had forgotten to bring a kerosene lamp into the kitchen and ran into the living room to get one. She must have it ready for use. The girl came back into the kitchen quickly, carrying the lamp.

Suddenly, the doorbell rang, and everyone jumped. Even Lucky started barking, a thing he very seldom did.

Amy was so startled, the girl found herself screaming, "Do burglars ring the doorbell?" Tears were streaming down her face.

Stephanie looked at her and sighed. "I'll go to the door. You two just drink your coffee, and I'll go see who it is." Still, the girl was cautious. Her nerves were frayed.

Stephanie could see a young man with a box standing on the porch smiling at her. The girl hesitated. Do burglars ring doorbells and smile at you and bring boxes to your house as a way to get inside? she thought to herself.

Shaking her head in disbelief, the girl spoke loudly through the front door, "Who is it?" The young man kept smiling. He couldn't hear her.

Stephanie opened the door, and the boy quickly asked her, "Are you Amy Maple?"

The girl smiled back and answered him, "No sir, I am her cousin. She is in the kitchen, should I get her for you?"

"I'm from Wright's Florist. I have a dozen red roses for Amy Maple. You may give them to your cousin for me, please. It was hard for me to find your house. The snow is coming down, and the wind is the worst I've ever seen. It's very slippery out too." The boy was shivering in the cold.

"Yes! I will give them to her. Thank you very much!" Thinking quickly, Stephanie gave the boy some money she had in her pocket for a tip. "Be careful!" the girl said sincerely as she took the box of roses.

"Thank you!" the young man said as he went quickly back into the storm and was gone. The storm was bad.

Stephanie looked at the box. Wright's Florist, it read.

The girl wondered what it was all about as she walked back into the kitchen to give the box to her cousin.

"A box from Wright's Florist for you, Amy," Stephanie said, watching her cousin closely. Still uncomfortable from the storm, the poor frightened girl was now left totally speechless.

Amy had no idea what was happening. She looked at the box and saw a card attached, but she didn't reach for it. The girl looked at her cousin who was watching her calmly. Her great-grandfather was trying hard not to smile.

Great-Grandpa Lawrence was the first to speak. "Do you have a beau, Amy-girl?" he asked curiously.

Amy remained silent.

"Why don't you open the box and see what's inside and who sent it?" Stephanie said anxiously.

Amy slowly opened the box and gasped. There were a dozen beautiful long-stemmed red roses inside. She looked at Stephanie and Great-Grandpa Lawrence with big eyes.

"Read the card," Stephanie said impatiently. "I want to know who sent them to you."

"Yes, of course." Amy opened the card slowly and was very surprised to see a familiar name inside.

"Who are the roses from, Amy-girl?" Great-Grandpa Lawrence asked curiously.

"They do appear to be from a Beau," the surprised girl answered as she smiled.

"Well, tell us Amy, who is this mystery-man?" Stephanie asked.

"Beau," said Amy.

Stephanie couldn't stand the suspense. "What are you saying, Amy? Who are the roses from?"

"Beau," Amy said, blushing. "They are from Beau."

"Do you mean this mystery-man's name is Beau?" Stephanie began laughing.

"Yes, his name is Beau, and he sent these roses to me," Amy answered quietly.

"Who is this man whose name is Beau? Tell us. Where did you meet him?" Great-Grandpa Lawrence suddenly wanted to understand what this was all about.

Amy was slow to speak. "You both remember the new class that I am taking at college this semester. I met Beau there, and we are partners. We have been assigned to write the first paper in the class together." The girl began to smile.

Great-Grandpa Lawrence slapped his knee and whistled loudly with excitement. "Our little Amy has a beau!" the man said loudly.

Stephanie hurriedly ran and got a nice vase, put fresh water inside, and asked Amy to put the flowers in the vase.

Amy didn't touch them. She just continued to stare at her great-grandfather, her cousin, and the roses.

Stephanie sighed and put the roses into the vase for her cousin. They were lovely!

Great-Grandpa Lawrence was still a little curious. "Does this mystery-man have a last name?" he asked.

Amy answered, "I have no idea."

Lawrence Elliot Maple began laughing. Stephanie began laughing. Amy had started laughing, too. Suddenly, they all noticed the kitchen curtains weren't blowing any longer. The bad snowstorm had stopped as quickly as it had started.

Stephanie ran to the window. The horrible snowstorm with the fierce howling wind had ended.

Amy smiled shyly. "I think I'll go up to my room now." The girl left the roses on the big old oak kitchen table. Great-Grandpa Lawrence and Stephanie both noticed she had quickly reached for the card and taken it up with her.

After Amy left the kitchen, the two had looked at each other.

"Our little Amy has a beau, Stephie-girl," Great-Grandpa Lawrence said quietly. As they thought of Amy, they both suddenly sighed.

Amy Ruth Maple's tears had stopped now. She was so happy the snowstorm had ended. She was also very happy there hadn't been any burglars who had rung their doorbell and then come into their house and robbed them.

Still holding the card in her hand, the girl had completely forgotten all about the storm and the burglars.

Amy had a beau. His name was Beau. She didn't know if he had a last name or not. He had sent her a dozen long-stemmed red

roses. She held the card tightly in her hand. He had been assigned to write a paper for class with her as his partner. There was a lot to think about.

Suddenly, Amy Ruth Maple had begun shivering, and this time she wasn't shivering because she was cold or frightened.

Great-Grandpa Lawrence and Stephanie sat at the big old oak kitchen table for a long time. They both were feeling chilled in the cold kitchen. Lucky had gone back to sleep by the fireplace a long time ago.

"Would it be all right if we go and sit in the living room? I am shivering." Stephanie asked quietly.

The man hadn't thought about it, but he suddenly realized he was cold, too.

Together, they walked through the swinging kitchen doors, being very careful not to let them squeak. Soon, they were sitting together on the old comfortable couch by the roaring fire.

The fire began to relax Lawrence, but he was still thinking of his Ruthie. The snowstorm such as they had had, brought the awful night back to him when his wife had run away.

Stephanie watched her great-grandfather closely. She should have understood what he was feeling earlier. The girl should have realized the snowstorm was reminding him of Ruthie. She had been so upset about the windows in the house that she hadn't thought of it.

The girl needed to get her great-grandfather’s mind on something else. She knew exactly what that should be.

"Great-Grandpa Lawrence, we really need to talk about the windows we have in this house. Did you notice how the fierce wind was blowing our curtains? You could actually see the curtains blowing! We have to talk about this.

"We either need to get these old windows fixed or just start over and buy some new windows. We can't put it off any longer." Stephanie waited nervously. "What do you think?"

"I think I remember what your mother Carol used to say about this house when she lived here." Lawrence Elliot Maple smiled as he began to quote Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. "Chill air and wintry winds! My ear has grown familiar with your songs."

Stephanie looked at her great-grandfather and smiled knowingly.

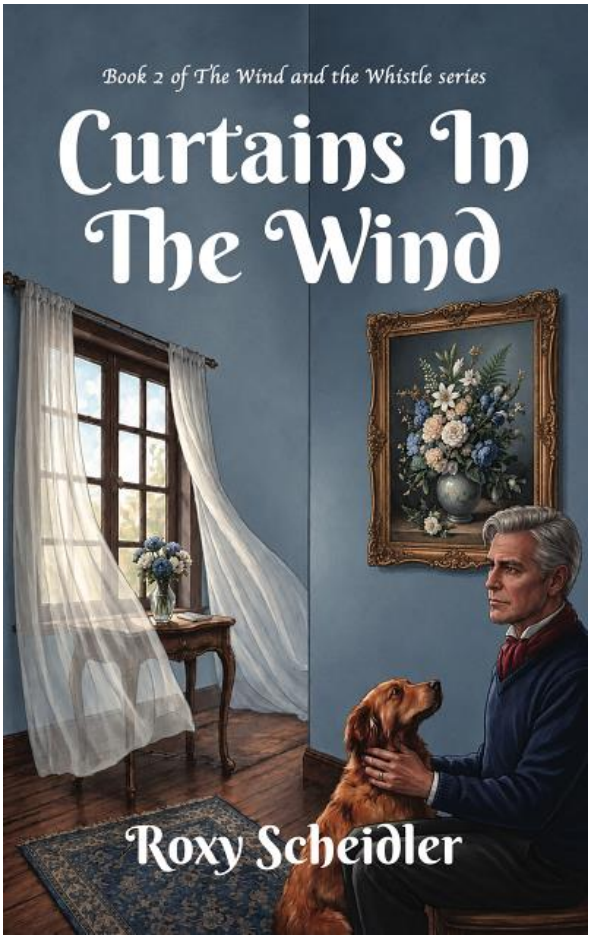
"You remember how your mother loved to quote Longfellow. Your mother taught me so much, Stephanie." Great-Grandpa Lawrence looked at his great-granddaughter who remained silent.

Stephanie began to quietly stare into the fireplace. The fire had remained cheerily burning. A few minutes later, she would walk back through the old squeaking, swinging kitchen doors carefully and into the kitchen.

The girl looked quickly through the window above the kitchen sink where for just a moment she could see the large brilliant glass bluebird figurine next door sparkling. It was like a miracle.

Stephanie Ruth Maple was happy to now be in the kitchen alone where she could talk privately and quietly to her mother Carol and

the sparkling glass bluebird figurine through the kitchen window. As always, there was so much to talk about.



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