

ALL  
THINGS  
NEW

LYNN AUSTIN



BETHANYHOUSE

*a division of Baker Publishing Group*  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

© 2012 by Lynn Austin

Published by Bethany House Publishers  
11400 Hampshire Avenue South  
Bloomington, Minnesota 55438  
www.bethanyhouse.com

Bethany House Publishers is a division of  
Baker Publishing Group, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Printed in the United States of America

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—for example, electronic, photocopy, recording—without the prior written permission of the publisher. The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is on file at the Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

ISBN 978-0-7642-1055-6 (alk. paper)  
ISBN 978-0-7642-0897-3 (pbk.)

Scripture quotations are from the King James Version of the Bible.

This is a work of historical reconstruction; the appearances of certain historical figures are therefore inevitable. All other characters, however, are products of the author's imagination, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

Cover design by Kirk DouPonce, DogEared Design

12 13 14 15 16 17 18      7 6 5 4 3 2 1

To my husband, Ken  
and to my children:  
Joshua, Vanessa, Benjamin, Maya, and Snir

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes;  
And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow,  
nor crying,  
Neither shall there be any more pain: for the former  
things are passed away.  
And He that sat upon the throne said,  
“Behold, I make all things new.”

Revelation 21:4–5

# 1



APRIL 3, 1865

Josephine Weatherly thought she'd already lived through the darkest hour of this endless war, but she had been wrong. Now all hope was truly gone. She huddled with her sister by the upstairs window in her aunt's home, watching smoke churn into the sky above Richmond, Virginia, like thunderheads. How could the city where she and her family had taken refuge descend into such terror and anarchy? President Davis and the Confederate government were fleeing. Hungry mobs were looting downtown. The enemy invasion everyone had long feared was about to begin.

"Shouldn't we leave, too?" her sister, Mary, asked. "Everyone else is." All day they'd watched streams of refugees fleeing Richmond, along with the Confederate government officials, their wagons and carts and wheelbarrows piled high with household goods.

"Where would we go?" Josephine said with a shrug. Hunger made her listless. She couldn't tear her gaze from the view of the city, barely visible beyond the distant treetops.

"I-I don't know," Mary stammered, "but . . . I mean . . . shouldn't we follow all the others? The Yankees are coming! Someone must know a safe place where we can hide."

*No place is safe*, Josephine wanted to say, but she held her tongue

when she saw the fear in her sister's eyes. Sixteen-year-old Mary had gnawed her fingernails and the flesh around them until her fingertips were raw. "Stop doing that," Josephine said, pulling Mary's hand away from her mouth.

"I'm sorry . . . I can't help it! I'm so scared!" Mary laid her head on Jo's shoulder and wept.

"I know, I know. But we'll be all right. We're safe here." Josephine was lying, and God hated liars, but what difference did it make?

For all of her twenty-two years, Jo had tried to be good and to do what the Bible said, but God hadn't paid her any notice. Nor had He answered a single one of her prayers during these unending years of war. She had asked Him to protect her two brothers as they'd marched off to battle, but Samuel had been killed, and no one had heard from Daniel in weeks. She had begged God to watch over Daddy after the Home Guard drafted him for duty, but he'd died of pneumonia last winter. Josephine had pleaded with the Almighty to watch over her and Mary and their mother, three women left all alone on their sprawling plantation, outnumbered by slaves. In reply, He'd sent a flood of Yankees into the countryside, forcing her family to flee here to Richmond for safety. She didn't know if she would ever see White Oak Plantation again.

In the months since they'd lived here with Aunt Olivia, crowded in with other refugee relatives, Josephine had fervently prayed for their daily bread and deliverance from evil, but famine and fear had moved into this house on Church Hill along with them. Dawn never arrived; the long nightmare refused to end. And so Josephine had decided in church yesterday morning that prayer was a waste of time. The Almighty would do whatever He wanted, heedless of her pleas. She wouldn't ask for protection from the fire or the spreading chaos or the Yankee invasion. A person who had the chair yanked out from beneath her countless times no longer tried to sit down.

"Aren't you afraid, Jo?" Mary asked.

"No." She felt wrung of all emotion, including fear. One way or another, by death or deliverance, the uncertainty and sorrow

would finally end. Jo no longer cared about the outcome. She simply wished it would come soon.

She heard footsteps and turned to see her mother, Eugenia, standing in the bedroom doorway. Mary saw her, too, and ran into her arms. “Is there any more news?” Mary asked. Josephine dreaded her mother’s answer.

“The colonel was kind enough to stop by before leaving to tell us what’s going on. He said not to worry, that the smoke is from bonfires outside the capitol building. The government is packing their most important documents and burning the rest. They’ll probably burn the tobacco and cotton that’s stored in the city warehouses, too, rather than let the Yankees profit from them.”

Jo studied her mother’s beautiful face, usually so calm and serene, and knew by the crease between her dark brows that there was more bad news. “What else did the colonel say? Are the mobs still looting all the businesses?”

Mother hesitated, then said, “Yes. He warned us to stay away from the commercial district, and so . . . I don’t want to alarm you, girls, but I think we’d better pack, just in case.”

“Are we leaving with everyone else?” Mary asked.

“Not yet,” Mother said, stroking Mary’s dark hair. Josephine remembered the soothing gesture from when she was a child, sitting on her mother’s lap, secure in the comfort of her arms. But she was too old to run to Mother now, and her grief was beyond soothing. Besides, Mother had a wellspring of grief all her own. “We’ll wait here a little longer,” Mother said, “but I think we should be ready to leave if we have to.”

“Are we taking everything?” Jo asked. She surveyed the trunks and crates of belongings stacked in their tiny bedroom. War had stripped their lives bare the way wind and frost strips leaves from a tree, until their once-flourishing life had been whittled down to a single room.

“We’ll pack only what we truly need, this time,” Mother said. “And only what we can carry. We’ll leave the rest to God’s will.”

Jo wondered if these last few possessions would survive or if

God would take them, too. She and Mother had clung to these reminders of their old life ever since the day a Confederate captain and his handful of men had ridden to their plantation, fifteen miles from Richmond, to warn of the advancing enemy.

“It isn’t safe to stay here any longer, ma’am,” he’d told them. He’d removed his hat out of respect, but he hadn’t dismounted. The horse snorted impatiently, fogging the chilly air with its breath.

To Jo, another loss had seemed unimaginable, coming a mere month after Daddy’s death. “But we can’t leave our home!” Jo had blurted out. “It’s all we have!”

Mother had stood proud and strong as she’d absorbed the news. Her inner strength seemed to be made from the same glue that held the universe together and kept the stars in place. She reached for Jo’s hand and squeezed it. “What will happen if we decide to stay here?” Mother had asked the captain.

“The enemy could be here within a day, ma’am, so I strongly advise you to leave. The Yankees are savages with no code of decency or chivalry.” He glanced around at the family’s slaves who had stopped work to listen and added, “Besides, there’s no telling what your Negroes will do once the Yankees get them all stirred up, promising freedom and all.”

Jo’s breath seemed to freeze in her lungs as she waited in the icy air to hear what Mother would do. The captain’s horse fidgeted and pulled at the reins as if eager to gallop. “We’ll have soldiers patrolling the roads into Richmond for as long as possible, ma’am. They’ll watch over you all the way. But we can’t guarantee your safety once we pull back.”

“Thank you, Captain.” Mother smiled, still the poised and lovely matron of White Oak Plantation. “Good day and good luck to you and your men.” She then went inside and closed the door. For the rest of the morning she had calmly issued orders as Ida May and Lizzie and the other house slaves had packed up the household, loading bedding and clothing, a few pieces of furniture, and trunkfuls of valuables into the carriage. Otis harnessed their only horse to the overburdened carriage and drove them to Aunt

Olivia's house in Richmond, leaving the remaining slaves alone on the plantation.

The city had been swollen with refugees and pulsing with fear. It bore little resemblance to the Richmond Josephine had visited before the war, but it had provided safety and shelter for the past few months. But no longer.

She turned away from the window and looked around the jumbled room. What should she pack? The things that once seemed so important to her—her brush and mirror set with the ivory handles, her diary, her grandmother's opal necklace—hardly mattered anymore. These were treasures for another time and place, unnecessary weights in a struggle for survival. She had brought several dresses with her to Richmond, but the only one she needed now was the green muslin one with their gold coins sewed into its seams. She unbuttoned her bodice and changed into that dress. Her mother and sister were changing, as well.

Josephine packed some essential toiletries in a canvas bag, then decided to add the photograph of her father, Philip Weatherly. It seemed like the very last token of the life she'd once known, and she feared losing the memory of his handsome face just as she'd lost everything else. When she finished, Josephine carried her bag downstairs and sat down in the parlor with the rest of her family to wait. Aunt Olivia and her three daughters had also packed their bags, but Great-Aunt Hattie refused to pack a single thing. "I came into this world with nothing," she insisted, "and I expect that I'll leave it the same way."

The sun had set, shrouded behind the smoke-filled sky by the time they were all ready. The parlor grew dark and cold. Aunt Olivia made sure everyone had a quilt to huddle beneath. Fuel had become very scarce, and they needed to conserve every stick of firewood for cooking. They had long since run out of lamp oil, but Aunt Hattie produced a tallow candle she had been saving "for such a time as this," and opened her Bible to read aloud to all of them: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear . . ."

Josephine stopped listening. The others may find the Scriptures

soothing—and Aunt Hattie certainly had enough faith to move a mountain all by herself—but Jo didn't. She considered the Bible nothing but fairy tales. She closed her eyes, wishing that God would end their lives quickly, if that's what He had determined to do. As the evening dragged on and on, she began to doze.

A loud banging on the front door awakened her. Aunt Olivia went to answer the door herself, having sent all of her slaves to their own quarters behind the house for the night. Without a word, Josephine rose and followed her aunt. Their next-door neighbor stood on the front step, nervously twirling his hat in his hand.

"Won't you come in?" Aunt Olivia asked, as if she was having a dinner party and he'd arrived a few minutes late. He shook his head.

"I saw the candle through your window and wanted to make sure everyone was all right. I see you decided to stay?"

"Yes. My sister Eugenia and I decided that we were better off here at home than out on the road somewhere in the middle of the night. Besides, we have no place to go. This is my home. I'll stay here and defend it the best I can and take my chances with the Yankees, if they come."

"Oh, they're surely coming," he said. "But they're not our biggest problem. I just walked down to the center of Richmond and . . ." He glanced at Josephine with a worried look before continuing in a softer voice, as if hoping she wouldn't hear him. "You need to stay inside with your doors locked. There's no law and order in Richmond tonight, and the looting is out of control. These aren't the Yankees, mind you, but our own citizens."

"Do you think the violence will spread up here to Church Hill?"

"No one knows what might happen, Mrs. Greeley. And that's not all . . ." He glanced at Josephine again, and she knew he didn't want to say more in front of her.

"Go ahead," Josephine said. "You won't frighten me." But when he spoke, his voice was softer still.

"The guards at the state penitentiary have abandoned their posts. All the prisoners are on the loose."

"Oh, Lord, help us," Aunt Olivia breathed.

“I’m going to let all of our slaves sleep inside our house tonight. Strength in numbers, you see.”

“Thank you for telling me. I believe I’ll do the same.” Aunt Olivia closed and locked the door again, then went out to the slave yard to order them inside. Jo heard the slaves stirring in the basement kitchen below her a few minutes later.

“You’re not letting the slaves come into the parlor with us, are you?” Aunt Hattie asked when Olivia returned with the news.

“Certainly not. I told them to stay down in the kitchen and to make sure they bolted the back door.”

Mother reached into the satchel she had packed and retrieved a small leather-covered box Josephine had seen in her father’s desk drawer. Aunt Olivia looked horrified when Mother opened the box and pulled out a pistol.

“Eugenia! Is that thing loaded?”

“Yes, it is,” Mother replied, calmly inspecting it.

“Do you know how to use it?”

“Of course. And I will, if I have to. I suggest you get the pistol your husband left you, as well.”

“But I . . . I really don’t think I could . . .”

“You don’t need to shoot it, Olivia. Merely pointing it at someone acts as a deterrent.”

Olivia went into her husband’s study and fetched the pistol and ammunition. “Here, Eugenia. You’ll have to load it for me.” Mother’s hands were steady as she loaded it. The two women sat with the pistols in their laps as Aunt Hattie resumed her Scripture reading in the flickering candlelight.

“Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid . . .”

“We’re going to lose the war, aren’t we?” Josephine said as Hattie paused between verses. Everyone stared at her in the darkness. “General Lee’s army is leaving, and the Yankees are going to conquer Richmond. The war is over, and we’ve lost.”

“We’ve had setbacks before,” Mother replied. “But our cause is just. Virginia joined the Union voluntarily, and we have every right to leave it. Right is on our side.”

“But can’t we be right and still lose?” Josephine asked. No one replied. “Do you think God is punishing us?”

“No! What for?” Mother said. “All we asked for was to live in peace the way we always have. The enemy is trying to conquer us and force us to change, but I’ve been to Philadelphia and I’ve seen the way they live up north—and believe me, it is very much inferior to our way of life.”

“How are they different?” Josephine asked. “I know they don’t own slaves but—”

“All they think about is money. They may criticize us for the way we treat our slaves, but they treat immigrants much worse. At least we provide food and shelter for our workers. No one up north cares if those poor foreigners starve to death in the streets. The North has none of the graciousness of our way of life and they worship the almighty dollar. The most important things to us are our families and our land and our traditions.”

“But if we lose the war—” Josephine began.

“Win or lose,” Aunt Hattie interrupted, “we must learn to pray as Jesus did in His darkest hour: ‘Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.’”

“If the war does end, at least the killing will end,” Aunt Olivia murmured. “We’ve lost so many loved ones already.” Her pistol lay limp in her lap; Mother gripped the handle of hers in her fist.

“If General Lee is forced to surrender,” Mother said, “it will only be because they outnumbered us, not because they outfought us.”

“I just wish we knew what was going to happen next,” Aunt Olivia said, “and when all this will end.”

“I wish we didn’t have to be afraid all the time,” Mary added. She was chewing her fingernails again. Josephine reached to take her sister’s hand and hold it in hers. A moment later, Aunt Hattie snuffed out the candle, plunging the room into darkness. One of Josephine’s cousins began to cry.

“Think of how dark it must have seemed to Jesus’s disciples after Calvary,” Hattie said. “Their Messiah was dead. All hope was gone. But then resurrection came on Easter Sunday, not just for

Christ but for all of us. The Almighty has kept us safe throughout this day, and we can trust Him for tomorrow.”

*What if tomorrow is even worse?* Josephine wanted to ask, but she kept her thoughts to herself. Aunt Hattie began singing hymns, but Jo didn't join in. This seemed like the longest night of her life as she sat waiting for the dawn. Exhausted, Josephine finally leaned against her sister and began to doze.

An enormous explosion jolted her awake. The blast shook the entire house and rattled the windowpanes. Mary leaped from the sofa and into Mother's arms, Josephine's cousins sobbed and wailed, and slaves screamed in the kitchen below.

“The Yankees are shelling us!” Aunt Olivia said. “Their gunboats must have made it up the James River.”

Another explosion followed, louder than the first. Josephine ran to the window and parted the curtains. The sun hadn't risen yet, but the entire sky glowed with an eerie, unnatural light.

More blasts followed, one after the other like a hundred cannons firing, until the whole earth seemed to reverberate. Josephine raced upstairs to peer out the window that had the best view of the city and saw molten flames leaping into the sky beneath clouds of thick, dark smoke. This wasn't a bonfire like yesterday. The city was burning. She stumbled downstairs again to tell the others. “It-it looks like the whole city is on fire.” Everyone stared at her, mute with shock.

Aunt Hattie spoke first. “It says in Scripture that at the end of the age ‘the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and all the elements shall melt with fervent heat.’”

*Stop it!* Jo wanted to scream. *Just stop it! You said that tomorrow would be better, but it isn't!* Her sister and cousins couldn't stop crying, and it seemed to Jo that the end of the world had truly come. There was nothing to do but wait for it. Aunt Hattie tried to gather everyone together to pray, but Jo wanted no part in it. “I'll go watch in case the fire spreads this way,” she said. She climbed the stairs again, alone.

Josephine had no idea how much time passed, but eventually

the sun rose and the sky began to grow lighter. She could glimpse a small stretch of Franklin Street between the houses and trees and saw a moving wall of dark blue marching down the hill toward the center of town, toward the flames. Wagon wheels and marching feet rumbled like distant thunder. The enemy had arrived.

If God was good, and if He loved Josephine and her family, how could this have happened? She had prayed! They all had. She covered her face and wept, not for her lost nation but for her lost faith.

Another hour or more passed, and the view grew dim behind a haze of smoke. Josephine dried her tears and went downstairs to rejoin the others just as their neighbor arrived at the door again. This time Aunt Olivia led him inside so everyone could hear his news.

“The Yankees are here,” he said quietly. “Richmond has surrendered. The explosions we heard before dawn were our own gunboats, the *Virginia*, the *Beaufort*, and the *Richmond*. We blew them to smithereens in the harbor so the Yankees wouldn’t get them.”

“It looks like the city is on fire,” Josephine said.

“Yes, the commercial district is ablaze, and our fire and police forces are nowhere to be seen. But the Yankees are working hard to quench the flames. Church Hill should be safe.”

“How could this happen?” Aunt Olivia asked. No one replied.

“Well, at least the worst is over,” Aunt Hattie said. She was the only one who hadn’t been weeping. “From now on, we’ll face whatever we must with faith in God.”

Jo didn’t want to hear it. She returned to her bedroom, her faith in God as shattered as the Confederate gunboats. Why pray when God wasn’t listening? Besides, her only prayer would be that the Confederate Army would surrender and the war would end—and her family would call her a traitor if she said that out loud. But why keep fighting? Why prolong this nightmare?

Josephine opened her diary, then closed it again. It recorded her past, but there was nothing left of her old life. Everything she’d learned during the past twenty-two years would have to be revised. Not simply cleaned up and pruned the way the slaves back home

trimmed the bushes and cut the weeds, but dug up and yanked out by the roots so that something altogether new could be planted in its place.

Jo still believed in God; only a fool could deny the existence of a Creator. But she no longer believed in prayer or in a God who cared about her suffering. It was time to bury her childish faith in a God who was her loving Father, watching over her, doing what was best for her.

As far as she was concerned, He was as distant and unreachable as her own beloved father.

## 2



APRIL 19, 1865

Eugenia Weatherly couldn't bear to watch her daughters go hungry another day. A week had passed since the war ended and the South had surrendered, and Eugenia's household was starving. She was the strongest one. She had to find food. She wrapped a shawl around her shoulders against the morning chill and strode toward the door to the slave yard, determined to find her manservant and enlist his help. But just as she reached the door, her sister Olivia called to her, "Eugenia, wait!"

Eugenia paused with her hand on the knob, impatient to be on her way. Her mind was made up and she wouldn't let her sister talk her out of it. "What now, Olivia? Your neighbor said to get there early, before the line gets too long."

Tears brimmed in Olivia's eyes and soaked her wadded hanky. "I can't bear the thought of you begging. Father must be turning in his grave. Isn't there any other way to get food?"

"No. There isn't. The larder, the root cellar, and all of our stomachs are empty. The market is a charred ruin, our children are hungry, you can't stop crying—"

"Only because of the news. I can't believe that General Lee has truly surrendered."

“Well, he has. The war ended a week ago, and we’re at the mercy of our enemies. If the United States Christian Commission is distributing free rations downtown, then I believe we’re entitled to some.”

“Who would have ever thought we’d have to accept charity?” Olivia wept.

Eugenia kept her chin raised with pride. “I refuse to think of it as charity. The Yankees stole everything we had, so it’s high time they gave some of it back.” She opened the door again, bringing a gust of cool air and the stench of the stables and slave yard into the tiny hallway. “I’ll be back as soon as I can.”

“Wait. You shouldn’t go alone. Let one of us go with you.”

Eugenia shook her head. “I’d rather go by myself. You’re still unwell and I won’t allow my daughters out in the streets with Yankee soldiers everywhere.” Nor did Eugenia want her girls to witness her disgrace as she begged for food. “I’ll take my manservant with me—Amos or Otis or whatever his name is.”

“Are you certain he’s still here? It seems like more and more of my slaves are slipping away every day. The Yankees are telling them they’re free to go.”

“I think it’s cruel to grant freedom to people who don’t know what it means or what to do with it. It’s like giving a lit torch to a baby. If my slave isn’t here, I’ll see if one of your people will accompany me.”

“Be careful, Eugenia. Everyone says it’s dangerous downtown.”

“I know . . . And, Olivia, please don’t tell the others where I went.” She hurried through the back door, eager to get this distasteful errand over with as quickly as possible. She was unaccustomed to using the slaves’ door and nearly tripped over a young black boy sitting on the stoop, whittling a scrap of wood. He jumped to his feet when he saw Eugenia and stood with his arms stiff at his sides like a soldier at attention. “Yes, ma’am?”

“Do you know where I might find the slave who drove me here from White Oak Plantation?”

“Otis? Yes, ma’am. He’s probably in the stable, taking care of that horse of yours and shining up your carriage.”

Eugenia felt a wave of relief that Otis hadn't run off like so many of the others had—or that he hadn't stolen her horse. “Tell him I would like a word with him.” The boy raced across the barren yard to the stable and returned a minute later with Otis. The big Negro halted ten feet from Eugenia and removed his straw hat. He was a tall, well-muscled field hand, and although Eugenia always found it difficult to determine a slave's age, she guessed him to be around thirty. He was a docile slave and kept his eyes lowered, as well he should.

“Yes, ma'am?”

Eugenia was suddenly aware that she no longer owned him and had no right to order him to do anything. She would have to *ask* him to go with her—and Eugenia had never asked a Negro for a favor in her life. She steeled herself for his refusal.

“I have an errand to run downtown near St. Paul's Church, and I don't think it's safe for me to go alone. I wondered if you would accompany me?”

“I been down there and seen the mess for myself, ma'am. I'm willing to go with you but . . .”

“But what?” Was he going to ask to be paid?

“Well, I hope you ain't planning on taking that carriage of yours. People see you got a horse, they be stealing him away quick as lightning. The carriage, too.”

Eugenia hadn't considered that possibility. The commissary where the food was being dispensed was at least a dozen blocks away, and she was unaccustomed to walking. But how would she get home to her plantation if someone stole her horse? “I suppose we'll have to walk then,” she finally said. “Find an empty burlap bag to bring with us.”

They walked two blocks to Franklin Street, then headed down the hill toward the capitol building, its white roof and the spire of St. Paul's visible in the distance. The closer Eugenia got to the center of Richmond, the more the landscape degenerated into a nightmare. She had tried to prepare herself for the devastation, but it shocked her just the same. Mere skeletons of buildings stood

in the deserted commercial district with blackened holes like vacant eye sockets for windows. Rubble lay knee-deep in the streets. Lovely homes had been reduced to piles of charred bricks and beams and tottering chimneys. The heart of Richmond—lovely Richmond—was in ruins.

Otis tried to avoid the worst areas, leading Eugenia around mounds of debris and past crumbling walls that threatened to topple in the wind. The breeze blew grit and cinders into Eugenia's eyes and left the taste of destruction in her mouth. Her shoes weren't made for such rugged walking. They turned black with soot, and if she hadn't been dressed in mourning, the soot would have stained the hem of her skirt, as well.

"Wait. I need to rest a moment." Eugenia paused, feeling lightheaded. The burned-out hulk in front of her was the bank where her husband, Philip, had done business. What had become of all the money? The bank records?

At least St. Paul's Church still stood intact and the capitol building across the square. The sight cheered her until she saw the hated Union flag flying from the capitol's rooftop. The grassy square in front of the building was a sea of indigo uniforms. Eugenia looked away, pressing her fist to her chest as her heart squeezed painfully. Had the war been for nothing? Had Philip and their son Samuel died in vain? She recalled the words of one of Aunt Hattie's psalms, mourning Israel's defeat by her enemies, and never had the words seemed so bitterly appropriate: "*By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, when we remembered Zion.*"

She drew a breath and started forward again, bypassing Capitol Square as she made her way toward Broad Street and the commissary. A line of people stretched away from it for nearly two blocks. Eugenia steeled herself as she took her place at the end of the line, distressed to see that all manner of unsavory people had lined up with her—trashy whites and saloon girls, worthless beggars and Negroes—people that Eugenia had never associated with in her life. She swallowed a knot of anger at being forced to stand in line with them, forced to seek charity. The jostling crowd nudged her

forward each time the line moved and she lost her balance for a moment and fell against her manservant. He gripped her arms to steady her, then quickly recoiled.

“Sorry, ma’am! Sorry! You all right?”

“I’m fine.” But tears of rage and humiliation stung her eyes. Eugenia had never dreamed she would stoop this low. She turned her gaze away from the filthy people crowding around her and silently vowed that she would never, ever, stoop this low again. Her dignity would be the very last thing that the Yankees would ever take from her.

“I need rations for my entire household,” she told the clerk when she finally reached the distribution counter, “as well as food for the . . . servants.” She had nearly called them slaves.

“How many people?”

“Eight. My servant can tell you how many Negroes we have left.” She gestured to Otis.

“A handful,” he said with a shrug. “Plus some little ones.” Too late, Eugenia realized that he probably couldn’t count.

The clerk reached behind him and lifted a sack of cornmeal onto the table. He added sacks of flour, dried beans, and rice, a ration of salt pork, and a greasy package of lard, grimacing while he worked. Otis placed everything in the burlap bag and swung it over his shoulder. Eugenia’s task was done. She walked away, refusing to thank the Yankee for giving back what was rightfully hers.

She had to stop and rest several times as they plodded up Church Hill again. The sun had become too warm for the shawl, and Eugenia felt weary with hunger. When they finally reached home, Otis stopped her outside the back door. “Can I ask you something, ma’am?” He stared down at his worn shoes, not at her.

“Yes? What is it?”

“Everyone’s saying we’re free now, and some of the others are saying they ain’t working for Miz Olivia no more.”

“And I suppose you want to leave, too?”

“Well . . . I promised Massa Philip that I’d watch over you and

Missy Josephine and Missy Mary while he's away. He said if I did, he would give my two boys their freedom when he got back—though I guess they're free now anyway. I kept my promise and helped y'all come to Richmond, but now I'm missing my wife and family something terrible. I'd like to head on back to White Oak and see if they're okay."

"How will you get there?"

"Guess I'll be walking home, ma'am."

*Home.* It called to Eugenia, bringing tears to her eyes. She lifted her chin, determined to remain strong. "You don't need to walk, Otis. If you can wait a few more days, we will all go back. You can drive the carriage for us."

He broke into a wide grin. "Yes, ma'am. I'd be happy to do that."

Eugenia was going home. She wanted to tell her sister of her decision right away and found Olivia sitting at her writing desk in the morning room, alone. "You're back!" Olivia said, springing from her chair. "I've been so worried about you. Did everything go well?"

Eugenia nodded. "We have enough food for a couple of weeks. But listen. I've decided to go home to White Oak."

"Oh, Eugenia, you can't leave! It's much too dangerous! The Yankee soldiers are everywhere, along with all sorts of vagabonds wandering the countryside. Refugees and Negroes and—"

"White Oak is my home. It's where the girls and I belong." She crossed the room to take her sister's hands in hers, pleading with her. "You should understand how I feel, Olivia. You didn't want to leave your home and so you stayed here through the very worst of it, when everyone else said it was too dangerous to stay. Now I intend to go home, too, no matter what anyone says. I'll trust the Almighty to keep us safe."

"But think this through, Eugenia. How many slaves did you own? Dozens? Suppose they turn against you?"

"Philip always treated them well. I doubt that they're dangerous. My manservant told me just now that he's been watching over the girls and me because of a promise he made to Philip."

Olivia pulled her hands free. “Don’t be naïve. Who knows what your other Negroes have been up to while you’ve been away.”

“Nevertheless, I’m leaving, Olivia. The girls and I are going—”  
“Where, Mother? Where are we going?”

Eugenia turned to see her daughter Josephine standing in the doorway. “Home, dear. We’re going back to White Oak.”

A faint smile lit up Josephine’s face, the first that Eugenia had seen in weeks. “When?” she asked.

“In a couple of days. Next week at the latest. I’ve only just decided this morning.”

“I don’t think you’re considering your daughters’ welfare, Eugenia. Or their safety.”

“I’m not afraid. Are you, Josephine? Because if you are, I won’t make you leave Richmond against your will. Mary either.”

Josephine crossed the room to stand beside her. “I’m not afraid. I want to go home, too.”

Eugenia caressed her daughter’s cheek, then turned to Olivia again. “There, you see?”

“I think you’re being very foolish.”

Eugenia exhaled. She recognized the stubborn look in her sister’s eyes, but she could be just as stubborn. She had won the argument this morning and had brought food supplies home. She would win this battle, as well.

“Josephine, would you please give your aunt and me a moment to talk in private? Thank you.” Eugenia waited until she and Olivia were alone, then said, “I need to think of my daughters’ futures. They deserve more than this cowering fear, this day-to-day existence, wondering what tomorrow will bring or if there will even be a tomorrow. They’ve become so quiet and withdrawn, and it makes me furious to think they’ve lost their girlhood to this war, the best years of their lives.” She reached for her sister’s hand again. “Remember when we were their age, how we would lie in the poster bed, giggling with secrets? Remember the dances we went to and the gowns we wore? And that delicious game of courtship? How we loved to tease and flirt! Those years were

filled with laughter and joy, but my girls don't know any of that happiness."

"I understand, but those things are going to take time—"

"All the more reason to get started right away. We've lost five years of our lives, Olivia—five years that we'll never get back."

"At least wait until Daniel returns. He'll probably be home from the army soon. Why not wait until he's there to protect you?"

"Because Daniel and the other boys have fought so hard, for so long. Even when they were outnumbered they kept on fighting for their homes and their country. I want to make sure my son has a comfortable home to return to."

Olivia's eyes filled with tears. "I-I don't know how to say this but . . . but what if White Oak is gone? What if the Yankees destroyed it?"

Eugenia released Olivia's hand and turned to gaze through the window. The sun that had shone so warmly on the way home from town had disappeared behind a dark cloud. "I've lost my husband, my firstborn son, and the life I once knew," she finally said. "If I find that my home is also gone, I don't know how I'll go on—but I will. The enemy can defeat us, but they can't break our spirits unless we let them. With God's help, I'm going to win back everything the Yankees have stolen from me."