

A woman in a red coat and hat stands on a snowy path in a forest. The path is covered in snow and leads through tall trees. The woman is looking to the right. The background is a dense forest with snow on the ground and trees. The lighting is soft and warm, suggesting a winter day.

JANETTE OKE

and

LAUREL OKE
LOGAN

Sustaining Faith

WHEN HOPE CALLS

••• BOOK TWO •••

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Sustaining Faith



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To David Horton, Jim Parrish, and Steve Oates
of Bethany House Publishers,
who for many years
through their dedication and diligence
have had such a big part in getting our stories
to readers.

With deep appreciation we say
THANK YOU.

God bless!

We will miss you.

Janette & Laurel



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New Year's Eve

Lillian reached for the little wine-colored sweater and touched its pearl-shaped buttons. Miss Tilly, their dear housekeeper, had knitted it especially for Hazel. Lillian held it up against her face and squeezed her eyes shut for a moment before folding it and adding it to the suitcase that held Hazel's belongings.

Parting was always difficult, even when it was clear that a good family had been found for one of their precious little charges. There had been a doleful period of mourning for each child who'd left their home—more correctly had left Father's house, which had been turned into a makeshift children's home last September while he was traveling on business so far away in Wales. Both Lillian and her sister, Grace, felt the sting of loss mixed with gratitude. After all, they weren't trying to be mothers. They were merely the best temporary guardians they were able to be, investing wholeheartedly in the lives of these precious children for a short interval of time. But the children needed real mothers, and fathers, and siblings—permanent families.

Lillian gathered Hazel's long wool stockings and rolled them

into little bundles before packing them away too. She closed the suitcase lid carefully, pressing down hard to snap its clasps shut. *Poor little battered luggage. It speaks of the long, hard journey Hazel has endured already, our tough little “Hazelnut.” At least now it holds far more possessions than it did when she first came to live with Grace.*

The suitcase had come all the way from England the previous winter, toted along by Hazel, who was eight years old at the time. Her mother had died, but Hazel wasn't truly an orphan. Her father had been left with five children to raise and little opportunity to provide for them. They'd been passed among relatives and finally surrendered to the government. Then the state had transferred the burden of their care to a large children's aid society, one of many approved by the government to emigrate “Home Children” from England to various lands within the British Empire. Here in Canada, as they stepped off an immense steamship, they were received by the Viney Boggs Mercy Society, a much smaller organization named for a wealthy eastern Canadian woman who had donated funds for its establishment. Because of the work of that humble charity, Hazel and her brother George had rather miraculously remained together when they arrived by train to the vast prairie province of Alberta, Canada. But after their first placement into a family had been a disaster and the siblings had run away together, they had come to live with Grace in a broken-down little house in Lethbridge.

Lillian shook her head even now as she remembered the events of the past year. First, she and this long-lost sister had been reunited. And then shortly afterward she'd been introduced to four sweet children who lived under Grace's protection—an overwhelming responsibility for a single woman in her mid-twenties, let alone a person who'd had no family to support her up until then.

The resulting offer had been so obvious to make, bringing

all of them to live in the home of Lillian's adoptive father until proper families could be arranged for the children. So Hazel's suitcase had been packed again for a move here to the edge of the little town of Brookfield, where Lillian had grown up under the shadow of the Rocky Mountains. And now, after just a few months, Hazel and her brother George would travel a little farther to the coal-mining town of Hope Valley to join their new family.

Lillian opened each drawer of the dresser once more to check that nothing had been overlooked. The bureau was completely empty now. She turned and scanned the bedroom, one of six on the second floor of the large house. There was a pair of shoes left under the corner of the bed, Hazel's best shoes for school and church. Lillian picked them up and held them against her heart. Her childhood bedroom would sit empty again now. Clean and quiet and abandoned.

First to leave their care had been Hazel's little roommate, Bryony, their darling eight-year-old, so guarded and withdrawn. But Bryony was now settled in well with the Mooreland family. Lillian and Grace crossed paths with the youngster often at church, sharing hugs and listening to stories from her new life. Bryony seemed content and at ease now with her new parents and two doting older brothers. The sisters knew Bryony was receiving the piano lessons she loved and that school was going well. Still, they missed her—felt the absence of her shy spirit around their kitchen table. It helped that Roxie Mooreland encouraged Bryony to refer to the sisters as Auntie Lillian and Auntie Grace. Lillian truly did feel that the child was family still.

Next to leave their home were Lemuel and Harrison. The boys had been adopted by Mr. and Mrs. Thompson shortly after all the chaos of late November, both of them anxious to serve in any capacity to nurse Arthur Thompson's filly back to health. And the young horse had recovered well, much to everyone's relief. Harrison had become rather a stranger in the weeks that

followed, reveling in his newfound family. But Lemuel continued to stop by often, walking the snowy mile that separated their homes in order to ask if there were any ways he could help. *Still a servant at heart*, Lillian thought as she wiped Hazel's school shoes carefully and wrapped them in a cloth. Having gathered up all the girl's possessions, including Nellie, the rag doll that had been sent from Hope Valley, Lillian moved out to the second-floor landing and paused, looking across to the doorway of a smaller room.

From time to time Lillian would stand at the entrance to Lemuel's bedroom. If she were completely honest, she would have admitted that she dearly wished he were still living with them. Oh, she was grateful that Lemuel was with the Thompsons now, overjoyed that he could live with parents who devoted themselves to helping him finish high school and perhaps could even offer him the college education that he'd meekly admitted he'd set his heart on. And yet privately Lillian cherished Lemuel as the nearest she'd ever come to having a brother of her own. She suspected Grace felt the same way about him, and hoped that he would always visit often.

And then, just before Christmas, arrangements were settled with the Akerlunds, the family from Hope Valley who'd pursued the chance to adopt George and Hazel. Miss Tilly had been the one to communicate their wishes first, and then Grace had made the journey into the mountains to meet the young family. Grace and Lillian had discussed their situation thoroughly. They knew that the couple had three younger children and that Estelle Akerlund, who took in mending and sewing, was anxious for the older children to help around the house. Hazel was only nine and yet Lillian fully expected her to be a competent assistant to her new mother. George, at age thirteen, would be very useful too. He'd become well acquainted with the husband, Ralph Akerlund, during trips with Miss Tilly while George was suspended from school in Brookfield. He seemed enthusiastic about having this new father.

But what about what's best for Hazel—and George? How do I know that they'll be loved and cared for and—well, nurtured? Despite the assurances of Miss Tilly and Grace, it made their parting so much more difficult for Lillian to wonder if the youngsters would be seen as family members or as live-in help. She understood the logic. Running a home was constant work, hauling buckets of water or coal, chopping wood, and keeping the fire stoked. Her own workload had increased as each of their little charges had moved away. Now she and Grace took extra turns at every task in endless succession, in addition to baking and cleaning and laundry and sewing. *But there's more to parenting than feeding and clothing. Will Mr. and Mrs. Akerlund understand how much Hazel and George will need someone to listen and shepherd them—especially since they've already been wounded by the trials of life?* Lillian wished once again she'd been able to meet the couple for herself.

This fear caused the brooding thoughts that held Lillian captive on this gray winter afternoon. It had always seemed that Hazel wore a little shell of protection in order to keep the difficulties of her life experiences at bay. But surely, underneath it all, the most tender parts of her spirit still waited for healing and restoration. Lillian prayed again that the Akerlunds would be able and willing to invest in the children's overall well-being, that they would be sensitive and trustworthy. Perhaps even Elizabeth Thornton, their schoolteacher in Hope Valley, would be able to minister to George and Hazel's hearts as well as to their minds.

Sighing deeply, Lillian moved toward the stairs. Miss Tilly would travel tomorrow to Hope Valley with the children. Pastor Bukowski, or Bucky as he was often called, would drive them all in his automobile. And they were to leave in the morning, on New Year's Day. By tomorrow there would be only two children left in the house—Matty and Milton, the six-year-old twins. As always, picturing the silly little boys brought a smile to Lillian's face.

Sounds echoed below. The front door clicked open and a whoosh of winter winds pushed inside. *Grace must be home.* The door closed with a thud, and footfalls stamped snow off boots. Lillian made her way downstairs but turned toward the kitchen instead of the front door.

Soon Grace's voice called from the foyer. "Sis? Are you around?"

"In the kitchen."

Grace made her way up the hall and into the kitchen, still wearing her heavy winter coat, house slippers now warming her feet. She set down her shopping basket and paused in front of the stove to cup cold hands over its radiating heat, then nodded toward the two suitcases now waiting beside the back door. "I see you've packed their things for them."

Lillian nodded sadly.

Leaving the pool of warmth around the stove, Grace crossed the room to give Lillian a hug. "I know how you feel. I can't believe they'll be gone tomorrow—so soon after Christmas. We'll have to do something special with them tonight to make the evening memorable."

"I suppose. Yes, that *would* be nice."

"I brought the mail."

"Any word from Father? I was hoping he'd write something about his latest round of speaking engagements. He traveled all the way to Scotland this time, you know. He and a distant relative. Dell-something. It's a Welsh name. I'm so glad Father made a friend there. I can just see those two men hiking around the countryside. He loves to explore."

"I didn't look through the mail. I just wanted to hurry home before it got too dark. Sorry."

Lillian pulled the cloth away from the straw shopping basket. She began pulling out the supplies Grace had just purchased, preparing to move them to the shelves in Miss Tilly's room. Grace slipped out of her coat in order to help. At last Lillian came to

the mail that was tucked down along the side. *A bill from the grocer. A letter from Lethbridge. That's all there is.*

Lillian tugged at the corner of the envelope until she could slip a finger in, then ripped one side open rather impatiently. The carefully penned letter was short and to the point.

Dear Miss Bennett and Miss Walsh,

We regret to inform you that permission for you to operate as a children's home under the auspices of Brayton House in Lethbridge, Alberta, has been withdrawn. Charges have been filed against you by Mr. and Mrs. Jack Szweda of Kedderton, Alberta. Until the complaint has been thoroughly investigated, we must ask you to suspend all activity as a temporary residence for children. You are to surrender any orphans still in your charge to the management of Brayton House as soon as you are able. We hope to receive your full cooperation in this investigation.

*Sincerely,
Quinley Sinclair*

"It's from the society," Lillian gasped. "Grace, look!" Her hand trembled as she passed the page to her sister. "We're being accused."

Grace's eyes widened as she surveyed the letter. Her words came slowly and on a whisper. "Oh dear. And we're probably guilty."

•••••

Ben Waldin shoved his hands deep into his pockets and stepped outside the company office door into the chill afternoon air of the Liverpool docks. One more voyage completed, his pay pocketed, and his next steamship to set sail shortly after the new year. He should feel grateful for a job well done and

almost a week of shore leave. But his mood was as dreary as the low-hanging sky. He scratched at the stubble on his cheeks and wished he'd bothered to shave before debarking. Sheltered for a moment beneath the awning of the ship offices, he watched the crowd surging around him. And he procrastinated.

He loved the sea. He enjoyed life aboard ship more than anything he'd known here on land. It was all he'd ever wanted to do. In fact, he still refused to regret that he'd run away from home at the age of fourteen to become a seaman. True, he'd started as little more than a ship rat, climbing inside the narrowest recesses of the heavy metal skeleton between the massive double hulls of a very modern steamship in order to clean and scrape and repaint all the places where grown men could never reach, but even with such laborious work Ben had somehow thrived as each year passed.

The great steamers plying the vast oceans were his pride and joy. He was glad to do his part. On his off hours he had the run of the hidden corridors, could quietly observe what none of the passengers knew of the frenzied activity below. And whenever he preferred solitude, he could dangle his legs from a narrow ledge far above the waters, arms draped around deck rails, apple in hand, listening to the steady sloshing of waves below and watching the slow progress of the moon across the night sky. By the end of his very first voyage Ben had become intimately familiar with the moon. And this same faithful moon hung above each subsequent expedition, waiting for the moments of solitude they shared. All through his twenties this secret, boyish practice made him feel most alive, most satisfied with his place in the world.

He snickered as he thought of it. Now in his early thirties, he realized it had been some time since he'd stolen away alone and spent a night just watching the sky. *Goin' to have to get back there soon, I s'pose.* But first, there was this visit home to manage, not to mention the obstacles of his unwelcome assignment to be confronted. Tipping his face up to find a hazy patch of sunshine

filtering through moist gray clouds, Ben drew the coarse wool collar tighter around his neck and flipped his worn flat cap back onto his head, then reached down a hand to heft his kit from the ground. All that he owned in the world was inside this duffel bag. He began the slow push through the crowded maze of people and cargo, past the swarming wagons and carts. He pressed forward toward the massive stone buildings of the grand city of Liverpool looming beyond.

Even as he trudged along, Ben sighed. It wasn't as if seafaring life had been easy. Gradually he'd worked his way up through various jobs: wiper, oiler, water tender, assistant to engineers, personal assistant to the officers . . . But this new job? This was the most distasteful kind of task he'd ever been assigned in his nearly two decades of seafaring, and he feared there'd be more voyages like it.

Now that he'd made the journey from Liverpool to Canada a couple times, his new captain seemed to think that his temperament made him the ideal person to handle the peculiarities of *this* new job. However, if there were any task he'd faced that he detested with all his being—this was it. All these young passengers—orphans, they called them.

Cast-offs from society, more like. I've seen 'em oft enough in the slums ashore. Ain't that just the kinda thing I wanna leave behind? The crowded trash heap'a mankind pressin' in all 'round? Children, no less.

And the worst part of it all was that they were already undernourished, sickly. He knew from personal experience that some of them would never survive the trip. He loathed every memory of his own involvement. Those staring eyes. That row of grim little faces pushed against the metal gates that kept them below, in their place, in steerage.

There were always caregivers with them. He didn't doubt that the requisite adults were doing the best they could under the circumstances. Ben's job was not to work directly with the children,

but to see that their group had every available resource provided for them by the ship company. While aboard, they were his responsibility. He delivered pushcarts of meals and towels and bedding, wheeled away soiled clothing, empty dishes, and slop buckets. He tried to avoid the ever-inquisitive eyes but, despite his best intentions, found himself carving whistles and tops in his spare time, pilfering the occasional item that the upper classes had thrown away, and constantly wrestling between wanting to be kind yet still keeping a detached distance. In his opinion, this interaction with children was not what a sailor's life was meant to be.

Yet there were really only two choices available to him. Take it or leave it. His value to the shipping company wasn't high enough to allow him to make special demands. And clearly those in charge saw this change of duties as a promotion—to be trusted enough to interact with actual passengers. He was aware that few of his fellow seamen were up to that particular Gordian challenge.

"I'd rather stay below," he grumbled into his wool collar as he struck off on his own at last. Raising one shoulder as a shield, he turned sideways and pressed through a row of vendors hawking their wares, dragging his heavy kit behind in the space left by his wake. He thrust his free hand deeper into the coat pocket where his money was hidden, didn't bother with an answer as the vendors called out to him to make a purchase, ignored them as they grasped at his coat sleeve.

He could try to hire on elsewhere, but times were hard and there was no guarantee of alternatives. Indeed, unless he was ready to give up the sea, prudence dictated that he'd simply have to surrender to the tasks assigned to him—whatever they involved.

Emerging at last onto quieter streets, he determined to close the distance between himself and the inevitable. It was time to face yet another unpleasant part of his life—a short visit with his

family. Jane would be there, his darling younger sister, innocent and sweet. But also his parents—the ones he'd disappointed most with his life choices, the ones whose constant criticism made it difficult to return to them each time he was in port. They'd insist again that at past thirty he should seek a new profession. The arguing was exhausting and more difficult to bear now with the weight of his next voyage already pressing down upon him. But they'd be all too ready to receive a portion of his earnings from him just the same. Every little bit helped. His dada's work was intermittent and his wages low.

Ben's feet took him dutifully through town, down the familiar streets, and at last up to the worn stone steps of his family home. But something was amiss. He knew it immediately. The door refused to open. His gloved hand thumped against the rough wood, but there was no answer and a strange echoing emptiness inside. Stepping back to survey the façade of their row house, he noticed a bill posted in the home's front window just above the long crack in the glass that had been there since he was a boy.

For Rent.

"What?" he breathed aloud. "Where've they gone?" For a moment he floundered in confusion, glancing up and down the line of houses for some clue, scratching again at the stubble on his face.

And then a shrill voice cried out from an open window not far above him. "Ebenezer Waldin? That you? Yer folks 'spected ya weeks ago."

Mrs. Gillery, the neighbor, had already noticed his presence. No doubt she'd heard the sound of his knock through the thin wall between their homes. The window not far above him had opened so that she could peer out and call below from her favorite perch.

"Aye, ma'am. It's Ben come home fer a visit. D'ya know where me parents are, Missus Gill'ry?"

“Ben—pah! You’re Ebenezer Waldin, son of William and Viola, y’are. Can’t fool those what know ya. And I know what become’a yer kin too. Gone with nowt left behind ’em.”

“Gone?”

“Yes, gone, I said, and gone they be. Off ta Canada.”

Ben’s mind refused to make sense of her claim. “I’m sorry, ta where?”

“Canada—by ship. You of all folk should savvy that. So, since ya wouldn’t abide with yer parents, they up and set out without ya.”

All of ’em? Even Jane? He managed to answer aloud, “But when?”

“Three weeks now.”

He turned back toward his own door, paused. Slowly his eyes swept farther down the street in one direction and then up the other in search of some additional witness from whom to inquire. Finally he rotated back to face Mrs. Gillery’s open window, completing a full circle in place while just trying to clear his head. He was ready to follow them, but how? Ready to surrender and obediently join them at last, but where? “Did they say anythin’ more?”

“Left ya a letter. Come here an’ I’ll give it t’ya.”

Ben trudged the few steps along the cobbled street to the neighboring stoop. The door opened before him, releasing the moist air of a boiling vat of dank laundry, the widow’s source of income.

“Come in,” she ordered.

“I’ll wait here, ma’am.”

“Do’s ya like. Ya always did.” Mrs. Gillery hobbled away into the dimness and returned with a sealed envelope. “See, I kep’ it fer ya as promised. Figured ya’d be back—by and by.”

“Aye, ma’am. Thank ya.”

“S’pose that’s the last of ya, then, Ebenezer Waldin. Wish’t ya had not’a broke yer mum’s heart.” Pressing the letter into his gloved hand unceremoniously, she closed the door on him.

Ben called after her, “Thank ya, Missus Gill’ry.” *Now what? The docks, o’course. There’s surely nothin’ fer me here.*



Despite her efforts to participate in a lovely farewell supper for Hazel and George, Lillian could focus on nothing other than the Szwedas’ legal actions. Swirling through her mind were the same truths over and over. *We lied to them when we said the boys couldn’t be separated, that Grace and I could only take them if the twins stayed together. By now, authorities on the matter have no doubt informed the Szwedas that this was false. In truth, we didn’t have any authority to accept Matty, let alone to make demands regarding Milton, the healthy one.* Then the internal arguments would follow. *But we couldn’t let them separate Matty and Milton. They’re twins! It would have been an outrage. And with Matty’s health issues, with his tongue-tie, his inability to speak well, how would he have survived a separation from his twin, on whom he depends so strongly?*

With a great deal of sorrow, Lillian had spent time alone in the afternoon writing a letter to Father. His trip to Wales not long after Mother’s death had been a constant drain on Lillian emotionally. She needed him, needed his guidance far more than a letter could give. And though she’d tried to be honest and candid in her letters, she’d failed to tell him the whole truth about the twins’ arrival to their home. Oh, she’d told about the dreadful Szwedas. She’d made a solid argument that the boys should remain together. What she’d failed to mention was the lie. The dreadful lie. Many tears were shed as Lillian transcribed the event more fully in this letter, explaining how she and Grace had brought the current trouble on themselves.

While cooking for the supper celebration, they’d made arrangements by telephone to pack up the little boys the very next morning after George and Hazel’s departure, and in the

afternoon they would drive out across the prairie to Lethbridge in Walter's automobile. Lillian worried again that they were all asking too much of her long-standing friendship with Walter, though he'd brushed aside her uneasy comments as usual.

Walter was so steady and gracious and helpful. With his unhurried words accentuated by the complexity of his quiet smile, the flecks of gold highlighting his brown eyes half hidden by the ever-present Stetson, there was much more to Walter than what some might expect of a cowboy, a cattle ranch foreman. But Lillian had known him long before that, when he was still a high school baseball star and considered quite a catch by many of the girls she'd grown up with. At the time, to Lillian, he was just Maeve Norberg's one-year-younger brother—the boy she'd tutored a little when he was in high school.

But that had all changed last fall when they'd been reacquainted. Lillian couldn't deny how much her feelings had stirred toward him. More amazing still, Walter had declared outright his intention to court her, asserting his patience with his long-standing interest in Lillian as she struggled with adjusting to so much change around her. She hoped she'd communicated her feelings to him well in return—demurely, yet earnestly. She feared sometimes that her reserved nature might give him less encouragement than a man might need. Yet, here he was again, rising to their aid during another crisis without reservation, empathetic and kind.

When Grace had shown the letter from the Mercy Society to their housekeeper, Mrs. Tillendynd, the older woman had reasoned that if such problems must be faced, they may as well be faced immediately. Dear Miss Tilly, always practical and direct. So just as Hazel and George were heading deeper into the Rockies to join their new family, Grace and Lillian would be escorting Matty and Milton out onto the prairie, toward adoptive parents who had already failed them once. Lillian shuddered at the thought.

Seated in the dining room for the going-away party, she looked across the table to where the six-year-olds were enjoying the festivities, giggling and leaning against each other. They shared that special bond reserved for twins. *O Heavenly Father, what would have become of either boy if we hadn't intervened? Surely that makes it right—what we did, doesn't it?* But one vexing question remained unanswered despite her persistent internal debate. *What will happen to them now because of what we did, because of us? Will they go back to the Szwedas? Could they be separated even now? Heaven help them! Heaven help us all.*

During supper, Lillian found herself frequently jolted out of her internal dialogue and back into engagement with the activity around her. Miss Tilly and Grace were managing to hostess well. Their precious children—George and Hazel, the twins, and even Lemuel and Harrison were gathered together at the table. But Lillian was certain the unexpected tidings hung heavily over every adult's heart.

"These are for you." Lemuel slid two brown-paper-wrapped packages across the table toward George and Hazel. "They're from all the kids at school." The shapes were easily recognizable as rather slender books, about the size of a postcard.

Hazel beamed and ripped away her paper wrapping. George seemed a little more reluctant.

"Oh, it's an *autograph* book. Lucy Schiller and Willa Blanding each have one. They're lovely." She allowed the signed pages to flip past her fingers, stopping on one of the entries surrounded by pink printed roses, then read aloud, "I ought to smile, I ought to laugh, but in this book I autograph. With love, Rose Friar." She snickered and showed the page to Grace.

George seemed reluctant even now that he knew the book wasn't something for school. "Thanks."

"Oh, read it, Georgie. Read us one."

"Fine, then." He turned to the first entry apathetically. "As blue sky follows the ship at sea, so may my good wishes follow thee.

Your friend, Hugh Grenville.” He nodded and looked around the table to see if it would be enough, closing the book slowly. “It’s nice. Thank you.”

“Mr. Thompson bought ‘em,” Harrison announced. “An’ me and Lemmie got everyone to sign.” It seemed that referring to the man who was both school principal and adopted father as “Dad” was going to take some time.

“Thank you,” Hazel repeated. “It’s so pretty. An’ not many of the girls have one yet.”

A chuckle from Miss Tilly. “Not in Hope Valley, a’that ya can be sure.”

Grace accepted the book from Hazel and turned a few pages slowly. “It’s lovely, dear. And when you’re older you can recall the friends you had at various seasons of your life. See, there are plenty of blank pages still. It’ll be a sweet remembrance for you.” Grace passed the book to Miss Tilly for inspection.

The work-worn hands slid across its fresh pages gently, pensively. “Comin’ and goin’,” Miss Tilly said quietly. “That’s what life is—jest so much comin’ and goin’. If I had a book’a remembrances, oh the pages I’d fill up with the ones I loved. But more, much more, think’a the people I missed who I might’a knowed. Only the Good Lord sees the workin’s of it all—knows the ways’a all His children everywhere.”



Ben walked slowly, uncertain as to his destination. There were cheap rooms near the docks, but what went on inside them were things that he had always guarded himself against, avoided at all costs. For one thing, he wanted to consider himself a moral man—but even more, he’d seen the consequences of poor judgment in those around him, the poverty of soul and pocketbook that bad decisions wrought. These were things he’d grown to fear lest any would take root in his own life.

He purchased a meat pasty for his dinner and ducked into a corner between shops to eat the steamy morsel in peace. At last, having nowhere else to go, he decided to fall in with the other deckhands who were loading cargo inside the steamer from which he'd just debarked. He wouldn't have an assigned berth, but there were plenty of hiding places where he could spend a couple nights before it set sail for its destination. A few treks in and out assisting with cargo would assuage his conscience about the unauthorized lodgings. Not one shipmate cast a questioning glance toward him since he was familiar enough to be recognized among the swarming crew. After establishing himself, he could find somewhere to rest. *Perhaps at long last I'll have another parley with the moon.*

He settled near an isolated porthole just in time to watch a winter storm roll in from the Irish Sea and up the River Mersey. Stuffing his kit bag into a corner, he lowered himself against it. It wouldn't be as comfortable as the feather mattress at his dada's house would have been, but it would do.

At last he drew the letter from inside his coat. What would his parents have to say to him now? How angry had they been while leaving him behind? However, the letter was in Jane's feathery hand. He recognized it immediately.

My Beloved Brother,

I'm afraid we shall miss you, departing before you return. Dada is taking us to Canada, as he believes there is better opportunity in such a young land. I wish I knew how to instruct you to find us, but we don't know where we shall settle. My sole prayer is that you will follow.

And yet my heart is torn in two. With all of my being I want to see you again, and at the same time I wish you to live in the manner for which you were created, to be free. Why can't it be both? I don't understand. If only I'd been born a man so I could work alongside you wherever you are.

I shall attempt to leave messages for you upon our arrival. I don't know how. But I trust that the God who bound us to one another as family will perform some miracle to bring us together again someday.

*I love you, as always.
Your devoted sister,
Jane*

Ben rocked forward, hung his head between his knees, and wept.