

ALL SHE
LEFT
BEHIND



JANE
KIRKPATRICK


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Scripture used in this book, whether quoted or paraphrased by the characters, is taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

This book is a work of historical fiction based closely on real people and events. Details that cannot be historically verified are purely products of the author's imagination.

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For Jerry



If I were to wish for anything, I should not wish for wealth and power, but for the passionate sense of the potential, for the eye which, ever young and ardent, sees the possible. Pleasure disappoints, possibility never.

—Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or: A Fragment of Life*

The impeded stream is the one that sings.

—Wendell Berry

Cast of Characters

Jennie Pickett	early Oregon citizen
Charles Pickett	Jennie's husband, assistant superintendent of Oregon State Prison
Douglas Pickett	son of Jennie and Charles
Baby Ariyah	deceased daughter of the Picketts
Lucinda Sloan	Jennie's sister and housemate
Joseph Sloan	Jennie's brother-in-law, Charles Pickett's boss as superintendent of OSP
Nellie and Mary	Sloan children
*Ariyah Cole	Jennie's best friend
*Peleg	Ariyah's husband
*Alexandro	Ariyah and Peleg's son
Jacob and Mary Lichtenthaler	Jennie's parents (farmers and legislators)
George Lichtenthaler	Jennie's brother (botanist)
David "DW" Lichtenthaler	Jennie's brother (lawyer and judge)
Fergus Lichtenthaler	Jennie's brother, butcher and later policeman in Portland
William Lichtenthaler	Jennie's brother, farmer near Salem
Mathias and Rebecca	Jennie's siblings, deceased

ALL SHE LEFT BEHIND

Josiah Parrish	early missionary, blacksmith, Indian agent, benefactor of Blind and Deaf school, Trustee of Willamette University
Elizabeth	first wife of Josiah Parrish, benefactor of orphanage
Norman Parrish (wife Henrietta)	children of Josiah and Elizabeth
Samuel Parrish	
Charles Winn Parrish (wife Annie)	
Lamberson (deceased)	
Charley Chen	Chinese cook
*Lizzie	maid and nanny of Josiah and Jennie
Callie Charlton	(child is Lenora) colleague and fellow student with Jennie
Mary Sawtelle	Jennie's doctor

*Character not based on historical person

Prologue

Love came later, when his words reached out to catch her as she fell, offering a cushion of comfort that held her and began the healing before she even knew the depth of ache and loss she carried. “Dreams delayed are not always dreams destroyed,” he told her. That truth brought healing to her life.

But her story begins long before that day, on her wedding day, when Jane “Jennie” Lichtenthaler took Charles Pickett to be her wedded husband. Their vows were spoken at her sister’s Hillsboro home, Washington County, Oregon, a state just celebrating its first birthday. A judge presided, even though her father was a pastor and could have officiated. It was five o’clock in the afternoon, March 27, 1860.

Later, each guest brought a lantern to the wedding dance and set it along the boardwalk, the shards of light a path the hopeful couple would follow into the Tualatin Hotel. Charles and Jennie slipped through the Oregon mist, the lantern lights shining on her slippers, sprinkling liquid diamonds onto almost auburn hair. The last to arrive, as was the custom, they laughed beneath the hotel’s canopy covering the entrance. March, a month of new beginnings, is often marked by rain in the Willamette Valley. Jennie settled her

hooped skirts, brushed water drops of weather from the yellow-dyed linen, and straightened the waist bow, as large as her husband's fist. He stood behind to smooth the ribbons cascading down Jennie's back, his hands then gentle at her bare shoulders, his fingers a tingle on her skin. "Ready?" he whispered in her ear.

At seventeen, she thought she was.

She nodded. Charles kissed her cheek, commented on her dimples, and they stepped through the doorway into the promise of their new lives, greeted by the music, laughter, and good wishes. Cheers went up and someone struck a tambourine to thrill the fiddlers into a faster jig, which Charles took as a sign to swing Jennie onto the cornmeal-covered floor. He swirled his bride as she caught glimpses of her father's smile, her mother's tears upon her cheeks. Ariyah, Jennie's friend and wedding witness, waved her gloved fingers as they danced by. Jennie's brothers and sisters clapped and stomped their feet to the fiddle and tambourine. The strong face of Josiah Parrish, the reverend and Indian agent, graced the crowd as they swished across the oak floor, his silver beard the only sign of age, belying the stories of the courage associated with a much younger man. He was a friend of Jennie's parents; his wife a generous soul whose dress of red stood out among the many darker cloths much easier to acquire in this far western place. Jennie leaned her head back and she let her husband lead her. Each guest blurred into a room of goodwill carrying present and future prayers for happiness.

Then Charles lost his footing.

Jennie blamed the cornmeal.

His arms flailed as though a skater on ice and he slipped from her perspiring fingers. She reached but they couldn't grasp each other. Charles fell backward. In the slow arc of disaster, she heard the crack of his head against the hardwood floor, his moan into sudden silence as the fiddlers saw the fall unfold and lowered their bows.

Jennie bent over him. "Charles? Charles?"

His eyes rolled away and he lay quiet. Someone gentled Jennie

aside, but she saw Charles return, his eyes open, try to focus. The crowd helped sit him up. Charles rubbed his head.

“Is there a doctor here?” someone shouted.

“I’m fine.” He listed, woozy. Joseph Sloan, Charles’s new brother-in-law (and boss), clapped his back as others stood him up, brushed off his dark pants of the cornmeal, and flicked the grains from white blousy sleeves. He’d removed his coat with the dancing heat. Others urged Charles toward his new wife and she reached for his hand. He grabbed and held it.

“Are you all right?” She shouted in his ear to be heard above the music that had begun again.

His answer was to hold her elbow, turn her out toward the crowd, and bellow, “It’s the father’s dance with the bride.” Her father moved forward as her husband handed Jennie off. One of her twin brothers took her mother’s hand to dance. To Jennie, Charles said, “I need fresh air. Don’t feel so good. Be back soon, promise.” He rubbed his neck and Joseph Sloan walked out beside him, steadying him.

Is that blood on the back of his head?

Her father began the now much slower waltz as Jennie twisted, trying to watch the two men disappear outside. “He’ll be fine. Just took a little spill.”

She nodded, tried to let the music slow her racing pulse. She didn’t tell her father what she’d seen that quickened her heart: something in Charles Pickett’s countenance had changed.



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Sharing All That Matters

SIX YEARS LATER

Spring in the Willamette Valley is rain-soaked grasses pierced by early blooms. “And then my heart with pleasure fills and dances with the daffodils.” Jennie Pickett quoted Wordsworth to her almost-three-year-old boy, Douglas, as they walked toward Pringle Creek in Salem. The short, white-petaled wildflowers dotted the fields, colorful essentials breaking the soil and the winter malaise and the pall from President Lincoln’s assassination the year before.

In a rare respite, Jennie and Douglas followed the path toward the tributary of the Willamette. Jennie spoke the word in her head, *Will-AM-it*, a pronunciation people said didn’t match with its spelling. But spelling had never been Jennie’s gift. Mother and son walked beside the mighty river, watched the commerce of ferry crossings, steamships, and small river craft gliding on its surface.

Dougie was never one to settle easily, and Jennie gripped him tighter at his urge to pull away, caught his emerald eyes that matched

her own. "If we're very quiet when we reach the creek, we'll see a surprise. You can look through the brass and glass. Would you like that?" That slowed his resistance, and he reached around to grab at the quilt draped over his mother's arm, the telescope safe beneath it.

"You let me?"

"Yes. Careful." He matched his pace to hers, skipping but still letting himself be held. They stopped to look at beetle tracks in the sand, listened as a hawk screeched in the distance. Jennie was pleased she'd left her hoops at home, as she could feel her son press against her side, his closeness warm and welcome through her blue-dyed linen skirt.

They reached the shoreline and Dougie nestled among the willows, then stood, wiggling as a child does. Jennie patted the quilt, urging him to sit, to lie on bellies side-by-side. For a moment a thread on the nine-patch gained his interest. Then he sat up and lifted the quilt to seek what bugs or twigs beneath it might need his scant attention.

The Schyrle brass and glass lay beside Jennie, the draws already out so she could quickly put the eyepiece to her face and then to his when the time was right. She debated about a practice look, decided against it. Like all almost-three-year-old boys, he could be a scamp about other people's things. She still taught boundaries and borders, yours and mine and others' being concepts in formation. A warm breeze brushed her cheeks.

Jennie had witnessed the promised "surprise" three times now. On the first occasion, she'd been uncertain of what she'd really seen and didn't have the Schyrle Jennie's brother George had brought all the way from France. The next time, she intentionally carried the telescoping glass, and like a prayer answered, the "surprise" happened again, an intersection she claimed of Divine presence into her fretful days, a gift to move her another step through the grieving of a great loss. That day, she hoped it would happen again so she could share it with her son.

"Lie beside me." She patted the spread quilt. The viewing spot beside the creek was hidden from the water but close enough they

could see the ripples, hear the impeded stream gurgling around tree falls and rocks. She whispered, “There, you see?”

“See what, Mama?”

“Shhh. The fox. We’ll see if he does what he’s done before. That’s the surprise.”

“I see foxes. Daddy shows me.” He pushed away from her, rose on his knees, scanned with his eyes, looked for the Schyrle, then turned back to the creek.

Jennie lifted the brass and glass and allowed the practice view. She helped him hold the telescope as she sat behind him. “Look at that rock there. You’ll have to close one eye.” She leaned around to see his face.

He squeezed both eyes shut, opened each, tried again. Jennie hid her smile.

“Pretend you want to wink at me. I’ve seen you do that.”

He giggled, then put his own finger to his lips, remembering to be quiet. He tried again and this time he closed the eye not against the lens.

She held the wooden barrel for him. “Can you see the rock?” He nodded, which took the lens from his eye. “Try again.”

“I see, Mama.” His voice held excitement. “E-nor-mous.”

“Yes. It does look big through the glass. Now when the fox comes by, if he does, look at his head. This fox plans and we can see him doing it if we’re very patient and wait.” A warmth filled her stomach, so pleased she was by her son following her direction. He often didn’t, listening more to his father and his aunt and uncle than to her—even his cousins and the boarders who lived with them held his attention better. Today, he held the Schyrle, a precious instrument. An artist had painted a calla lily on the smooth wooden barrel.

Birds sang into the silence as Dougie swung the Schyrle back and forth through the air like a confused symphony conductor.

“Careful.” They wouldn’t be able to stay much longer.

With her hand she stopped Dougie’s thrusting. She pointed as the

animal trotted along the opposite bank that narrowed the waterway. One could see the rusty-red fur with the naked eye, but seeing the surprise required the Schyrle. She modeled stillness, then softly, “Can you see the fox?”

“Yes, Mama.” He mimicked whispering.

“Good boy. Watch what he does.”

The fox had stopped at a willow and did what she’d seen him do before: he tugged at tufts of wool that passing sheep had left behind. The creak of willow canes as he mouthed the wool snapped in the still air. Again and again, he pulled at wooly bits until he had a mouthful. Then the fox plunged into the creek, his muzzle still a foam of grayish-looking fur. His head and the top of his back cut a chevron in the water.

“What’s he doing, Mama?”

“Look through the brass and glass.” He turned back. “Point it at his head. See?” He nodded, moving the telescope, and she chided herself for asking him questions he felt compelled to answer.

As the slow current carried the fox along—they were so close—small black dots leapt from the fox’s head and nose and dropped onto the bits of wool in the fox’s mouth. The animal then released small tufts into the water. Laden with fleas and bugs, the islands of wool floated away from him. “Keep following with the Schyrle. I hope you can see the little black things jumping from his head to the little boats of wool he spits out.”

Dougie sat spellbound, watching as the cleansing continued until the fox swam around a bend, out of sight. Unbidden tears formed in her eyes. She wasn’t certain if the tears came from the delight at witnessing this natural event with her son or at some unknown emotion moving in to fill grief’s leaving.

Dougie turned his head and she took the Schyrle from him. He smiled. “What was that, Mama?”

“That fox found a way to get rid of unwanted visitors to his fur.”

He frowned, then tucked his chin in thought.

“Those little black things bouncing from the fox’s head were fleas

and ticks, creatures that trouble him. They jump onto his fur when he's not looking, but he knows they're there."

She collapsed the telescope back into the barrel, clipped the lens cover over the end. They stood. She considered asking Dougie to hold the Schyrle while she folded the quilt but didn't want to test his good behavior. She put it down, draped the quilt over her arm, then lifted the lens, noting Dougie's still-confused face.

"He gathers wool from the willows and then lets the wool trick those little beasts into leaving his fur. They think they're hopping onto another sentient being instead of onto little wool boats that will carry them away."

"Sent-tent?"

"Sen-tee-ent." She sounded the word out and hugged her son. "The fox is a warm being with breath and blood and heart. It can feel pain and even plays at times. I've seen that fox jump up on all four feet and hop around. We are feeling, sentient beings too. We have that in common with animals. That fox tricked those bothersome things into floating away from him." She lifted a bit of lint from Dougie's short pants.

"I run ahead, Mama."

"Yes. But be careful."

She bent down to kiss his cheek as he startled forward toward his next adventure. But then he turned his face, popping warm lips on her cheek instead as he scampered away. She folded the quilt, cast a last glance at the daffodils, touching her fingers where Dougie had planted that rare kiss. A second surprise.

She walked the path back to her sister's home, keeping Dougie in sight, breathing in the scent of spring, allowing the light breeze to lift strands of hair from her bonnet-less head. Dougie disappeared behind the house and would likely untie the dog, who barked his own impatience at not being allowed to go with them. Inside, the world would be in full motion.

A steamboat whistle shrieked in the distance as Jennie ascended the

wooden steps. Would the cargo boat have brought her latest shipment, unloading it at Pringle Creek before the boat headed to Eugene? She hated waiting for cargo from San Francisco. There'd been lung illness each summer in the Salem village, and Jennie did her best to keep her family healthy. The oils and aromatics she ordered helped cleanse the house and heal bodies.

It came to her then as she opened the door that the fox was not only clever, but that he was a self-healer, one who didn't wait for something or someone else to solve his discomfort of ticks and fleas that irritated his days. He'd found release with a little help from the sheep who wandered past and left their wool. Had he thought it through somehow? Was it the gift of instinct? Who knew? What mattered was that it worked and he had cleverly healed himself. Perhaps all sentient beings had that capacity. There was a lesson there. Jennie just had to learn it.