

Gettysburg Battle Day 1 1 July 1863

Gettysburg

The morning dawned cool and cloudy. As she usually did, Maggie got up first and went downstairs to fix breakfast for the three other women. She started by making bread. While the dough was rising, she returned to the bedroom where she washed and dressed. By the time Maggie got back to the kitchen the dough was ready. She took the damp cloth from over the bowl, energetically punched the dough down, broke it into three parts, put each part into a pan, and slid everything into the oven. She turned next to frying up bacon and eggs and boiling water for tea. Hearing footsteps behind her, she turned to see Frankie, eyes half-open, pass by on her way to milk the cow.

“Good morning!” Maggie called.

“Mmph...” Frankie replied.

Of her children, Frankie was the night owl rather than the early bird and was not civil at least two hours after rising.

As she sliced day-old bread, Maggie mentally made out her chores for the day. The parlors needed dusting. The kitchen wanted a good scrubbing. And the floors needed sweeping and washing again.

Dirt, she thought, annoyed. She had hoped it would be less prominent in Gettysburg but alas, even though the town had brick sidewalks, the streets were not paved, and dirt was a regular visitor.

Once the bread was sliced, Maggie put it on a plate and set out the butter, jam, and apple butter. The preparations pleased her. They all would need a good breakfast to get through the day.

Lydia breezed into the room next, announcing that she had several appointments that morning. She was followed by Emily, who fetched plates and silverware and set the table.

A few seconds later, Frankie stumbled back in, carrying a pitcher of milk.

“Did you put the milk can in the icehouse?” Maggie said.

“Yes.” Frankie yawned and set the pitcher on the table.

By 7:30 they were able to sit down. On cue, they all bowed their heads.

“Gracious God, we thank thee for a new day,” Frankie murmured. She had been elected family pastor by dint of her studies at the seminary. Maggie figured her daughter could use the practice. “May thee remember those in our family who are away. We beseech thee to keep them safe so we may meet again. And bless this food so that we may do thy will this day. Amen.”

“Amen,” the others chorused, and Maggie passed around the platter of bacon and eggs.

About a half hour later they were almost finished with breakfast, having eaten rather leisurely and conversed about the weather, the war, and how the rest of the family might be doing.

Suddenly Lydia cocked her head. “Did you hear that?”

The others looked curiously at her.

“I thought I heard a bugle.”

“Surely not,” Emily said.

Maggie frowned. She was hearing a faint pop-pop-pop now. “What’s that?”

The sounds became more frequent and numerous, although they were still some distance away.

The women rose and went to the front porch to hear more clearly. Some of their neighbors had come out onto their porches as well.

“What do you think it is?” the woman across the way asked.

A man strolling down the street paused and said, “Sounds like rifle fire to me. Might be a skirmish.”

No sooner were the words out of his mouth than Lydia bolted into the house and emerged in a few seconds carrying her medical bag. “I’m going now, Mama.” She planted a hasty kiss on Maggie’s cheek and did the same to Emily and Frankie. “If we’re going to have fighting, then I want to make sure my patients are all right.”

Maggie’s heart pounded. “Oh no, Liddy, please don’t. It could be dangerous!”

“I will be fine.” She gave her mother one more kiss. “I’ll be home soon.”

Wringing her hands, Maggie watched her oldest daughter jog down the steps and stride briskly up West Street. Another figure, running from the north part of town, passed her and dashed to their porch. It was Gus Schultz. “Frankie! Come quick! You can see it from the seminary!”

“See what?” Emily asked.

“The skirmish! C’mon!”

“Skirmish?” Maggie made a grab for her daughter’s arm. “Frances, no!” But Frankie evaded her.

“I’ll be fine, Mama. I’m with Gus!” Picking up her skirts, she joined her friend in galloping up the street.

“You come back at the first sign of danger!” Maggie yelled feeling helpless. Things were rapidly spinning out of control.

She turned to Emily. “Do you think it’s really a skirmish?”

“I’m sure of it.” Emily slipped her arm through Maggie’s. “But don’t you worry. Our boys’ll chase those Rebs away.”

By 9:00 a.m., a more ominous sound began. At the first boom of the cannon, Maggie and Emily ran to the second story balcony at the back of the house. From that position, they could see smoke rising from the artillery fire. Things were getting serious. This was no skirmish. “What should we do?” Emily said.

“I don’t know. I wish the girls would come home.”

Something screamed through the air. Then there was a loud BANG! And the back balcony of the house at the north end of the street exploded into splinters.

Emily clutched Maggie’s arm. “Sweet Jesus!”

Maggie pulled her friend into the house. “They’re bombarding the town!” They pounded down the stairs.

“Oh, Maggie, what should we do?”

Someone was shouting on the street. Maggie dashed through the house to the front porch just as a Union soldier rode up. “Go to the cellar,” he shouted. “Now!”

The two women darted to the kitchen, threw open the cellar door, and hurried down the wooden steps. In the dank dark, Maggie found a lantern and lit it to help them make their way to the back. There they crouched on a pallet that held small barrels of flour, pickles, and corn meal.

Emily was trembling. “We need to pray. Can you do it? I can’t find the words.”

“Yes, of course.” Maggie could barely think herself, but steadied her breath and said, “Oh, dear God, help us. Help my daughters.”

[The story continues as Lydia, a midwife, helps a patient who is giving birth.]

The artillery made Frankie's ears ring as she and Gus tore down the Chambersburg Road. The zing of a bullet zipping past gave Frankie a shot of adrenaline. She suddenly had the strength to run faster and did not stop until they reached the Diamond.

"That was too close!" A wheezing Gus bent over, hands on his knees.

Frankie took the same posture as she fought to get her breath back. "Oh Gus, I really should go home."

"Not a good idea. I think shells hit the west part of town. It's not safe to go there. How about we go down Baltimore Street to Cemetery Hill? We could sit on the crest and watch the fighting 'til it's over."

"I don't know, Gus." Frankie was now regretting ever having gone out.

"Look, we can't stay here. We've got to go somewhere."

"I know. But I must go home. Mama will be worried sick. And what if a shell has hit our house? They'll need help."

"You can't do anything about that now. Come on."

As they made their way south, they came upon a crowd rushing along Middle Street. Curious, they followed and joined a knot of people at the corner of Middle and Washington. They discovered that some of the town folk had gathered to cheer the Eleventh Corps, who were marching up Washington Street and to protect the Gettysburg.

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Lydia was able to leave the Campbell's house around 10:30. Praying that no stray shells would hit her, she ran as fast as she could. As she turned onto her street, she happened upon four men in blue. Two of them were carrying a third on a stretcher. Another struggled to keep up with his fellow soldiers. Lydia hurried to their side. "Where are you going?"

"Wherever we can find shelter," one of the stretcher bearers said.

"Come with me, please."

A few minutes later she was entering the house and calling, "Mama! Emily!" She turned to the men. "Please go in there." She indicated the front parlor.

Maggie heard her daughter call and took the cellar steps two at a time. "Oh, thank God!" she cried and threw her arms around her daughter.

Lydia said, "Mama, we have some guests." She led her to the parlor. Emily followed.

What Maggie saw made her hand fly to her mouth. The man lying on the stretcher appeared to be missing part of his leg. A tourniquet had been applied, but his trouser leg was soaked in blood. Another soldier had a head wound. A third was bleeding from an arm wound and a leg wound. The last man appeared to be whole. Swallowing the urge to get sick, she said, "Welcome to our home." Turning to Lydia, Maggie added, "Let's go into the hall and decide how best to care for our visitors."

Once they were out of the room, Maggie whispered. "They are terribly injured! We aren't able to care for them."

"Yes, we can," Lydia said. "I am able to treat most of their wounds. The man with the leg injury needs a surgeon, though. I'll try to find one after we take care of the others. If I cannot locate a surgeon," she took a breath, "well, then I shall have to operate on him myself. Fortunately, I have some ether in my supplies."

"Do you think you might have to take his leg?"

“Yes. There is no ‘might’ about it.”

“Oh, my dear,” Maggie gasped. “Are you able to do that?”

“If I must, yes.”

Emily heaved a resigned sigh. “Well, as my mama always said, first things first. Let’s take care of their immediate problems. It looks like those poor boys are parched. I’ll get them some water.”

“Yes,” Maggie said. “Why don’t we provide food and water while you examine them, Lydia.” She forced herself to say the next words, “And if you find that you need help with the doctoring, then we shall assist.”

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During the morning, conditions worsened. As the fighting drew closer, Union officers urged people in the northern part of Gettysburg to evacuate. Many did, which clogged the east- and south-going roads. Those who did not leave huddled fearfully in their cellars.

By early afternoon, large numbers of wounded were finding their way into town and the doors to public buildings and churches were flung open to accommodate them. Many private homes were also housing the wounded. These makeshift hospitals made use of local doctors, and army surgeons and nurses. The town’s women, most of whom had experience in treating the ill and injured in their families, served as volunteer nurses. Those who did not possess nursing skills engaged in what would become a never-ending task of providing water and food.

At the house on West Street, the number of wounded Union men had grown from three to ten. As falling shells and stray bullets became more intense, citizens and soldiers alike sought shelter.

[Up on Pine Hill (present day Yellow Hill), Nate, Andrew (Eli’s brother-in-law), Matilda, and Chloe are able to watch the action around Gettysburg from afar.]

Maggie flinched as another shell flew over their house. *Don’t let it hit*, she pleaded as she pressed a cup of water to the lips of the latest soldier to find his way into their home. When he had drunk his fill, she dipped a rag in a bowl of water and washed the blood from his face and arm. The bullet wound looked bad, much worse than the one Eli had suffered in ’61. But her initial queasiness at seeing so much blood, torn flesh, and even semi-connected limbs was fading the longer she worked among the wounded.

Glancing worriedly toward the hallway, she wondered what was taking Lydia so long. Her daughter had gone to fetch a doctor. Maggie tried not to think about the dangers beyond their front door but couldn’t help herself. And then there was Frankie, who was still missing. *Oh, dear Lord*, Maggie prayed, *please keep my girls safe*. She took a steadying breath and told herself to just keep working. *Don’t think about anything else. Just work.*

When she finished bathing the new arrival’s wounds, she picked the bowl up and returned to the kitchen where Emily was pulling several loaves of bread out of the oven.

“I’ll bring them bread, butter, strawberry jam, and apple butter,” Emily replied. “Don’t know what we’ll have for supper.” She paused, putting her hands on her hips. “How many more do you expect we’ll get?”

Maggie shook her head. “I have no idea.”

Another shell whistled from the northern part of town. Both waited. There was no explosion.

“A dud?” Emily ventured.

“Perhaps.”

Emily sighed. “Lord have mercy...”

[Up on Cemetery Hill, Frankie and Gus seek shelter with Gus’s Aunt, who lives near the Spangler farm. Frankie is now separated from her family for the remainder of the battle.]

[Seeing that one of the soldiers in their house may need to have a limb amputated, Lydia runs to the Union School, where people on the street told her there is a doctor. Although she has a textbook describing how to do an amputation and has seen a leg amputation, she asks the doctor to let her observe and then attend.]

The town people watched the Union retreat from their windows and porches as the rifle and artillery fire continued and smoke and dust swirled, filling the air. When Union soldiers sped in retreat down South Baltimore Street, citizens rushed out to give them water. But the fighting grew closer and they were told to return their cellars.

The situation deteriorated further as Union and Confederate forces took to hand-to-hand combat. People cringing in their cellars could hear screaming and shouting and shooting outside. Artillery limbers, caissons, and wagons clogged the streets, making passage difficult if not impossible. When the bulk of the Confederate troops drew near, Union men took to hiding anywhere they could.

Maggie was coming down the hall with yet another basin of water to bathe wounds when she was stopped dead in her tracks by the sight of eight Union soldiers rushing through her front door.

“Hide us!” one cried. “The Rebs are right behind!”

She set the basin on the front stairs as she said, “Go directly down the hall and wait for me in the kitchen. Tell the woman who is there to lock the back doors.”

As they thundered away Maggie slammed the front door and threw the bolt. *Oh, please, she prayed. Don’t let them break it down.*

By the time she got to the annex bedroom, Emily had already instructed the soldiers to push back the bed and shove aside the rug. They were just starting to descend the ladder into the secret cellar.

“We will give you food and water as we can,” Maggie said. “You’ll find a few buckets down there to use as necessaries.”

“Thank you, ma’am,” the last man said as he disappeared. Emily dropped the trap door over them.

“Where shall *you* hide?” Maggie asked her while they pulled the rug back over the entry to the hiding place. Things had gone strangely silent outside and it was unnerving.

“Upstairs in one of the closets.”

They grunted and shoved the bed back into place just in time to hear a loud knocking at the front door.

“Go,” Maggie urged.

Emily dashed up back staircase while Maggie quickly walked to the door. She took the time to compose her expression and posture.

When she unbolted and opened the door, she found a blond, bearded man in gray. He obviously was an officer. His uniform though dusty, was in good shape.

Maggie held her voice steady. “May I help you, sir?”

“My name is Captain Charles Morrison. I am sorry to intrude, ma’am, but I am required to search your house for Union soldiers.”

“I see.” She opened the door. “Please do come in.”

Behind Captain Morrison were a group of five ragged, barefoot, odiferous soldiers. These fanned out throughout the house.

“You aren’t hiding any Union soldiers here, are you?”

Maggie smiled sweetly. “Why, no, sir. The only Union soldiers in this house are injured ones.” It wasn’t really a lie. After all, she wasn’t talking about the cellar, which was under the house.

“I just wanted you to understand why we must do this.”

“I understand perfectly. It is war. They are the enemy.” She gazed into his handsome young face. “We are enemies, too, are we not?”

“I would have it otherwise if I had my druthers,” was his gallant response. “May I trouble you for your name?”

“Mrs. Smith.”

He observed his surroundings. “You have a lovely home, Mrs. Smith. Surely you can’t be alone here.”

“She sure as hell cain’t,” a voice called from the stairway.

Maggie managed to suppress a gasp. The soldier had one hand wrapped around Emily’s arm as he dragged her down the stairs. Emily pleadingly met her eyes. Mouth dry, Maggie quickly said, “Oh, but that is just my servant Emily. She’s been with me for ten years.”

“Should we take her with the others, sir?”

“Oh, no!” Maggie cried. “You cannot do that! You see, my husband is away, and my son-in-law died recently at Salem Church. At the moment, I do not know where my two daughters are, for they left the house before the shooting really began. I would be all alone if you took Emily. And surely you cannot expect a woman in my delicate condition,” here she laid a hand over her belly so the Captain could see she was pregnant, “to cook and care for all these men without some kind of help. If you took Emily, then our patients surely would suffer more than they already have.”

Captain Morrison bit his lower lip in thought. His gaze shifted from Maggie’s imploring eyes to Emily’s tense face. “She isn’t an escaped slave, is she?”

“Why, sir! She was born and raised free in New Jersey. My family knew hers.”

He nodded. “All right.” He addressed the soldier, “Release the woman.” Returning to Maggie, he said, “I will post a notice on your porch saying your servant is under my protection. She should be safe henceforth.”

Maggie tried not to look too relieved. “Thank you. Would you and your men care to take supper with us, Captain?”

Smiling, he took off his hat. “It would be my pleasure, Mrs. Smith.”

And so Maggie and Emily cooked as tasty a supper as they could for both their newest guests and their wounded. The Confederate soldiers dined outside on the porch while Maggie and Emily ate in the kitchen with Captain Morrison.

“I haven’t had this good a meal in ages,” Morrison commented as he sopped up the chicken gravy. “These biscuits are light as a feather.”

“Emily made them.”

“Did she?” Morrison met Emily’s eyes. “I just might trouble you for your family recipe, Emily.” He sat back and thoughtfully dabbed his lips with the napkin. “Interesting custom you have, Mrs. Smith, of letting your help eat at the table with you.”

Maggie checked Emily’s face. It was as if her friend had dropped a curtain over a window so no one could see in. Maggie smiled charmingly at the Captain. “We work so

closely together I feel as if Emily is part of my family. In these topsy-turvy times surely no one can begrudge me a little company.”

Morrison smiled. “You are a generous woman, Mrs. Smith.”

Maggie looked down at her plate and pushed a few green beans around with her fork. Then she met Morrison’s eyes once more. “Why are you being so kind? You’re the enemy.”

Captain Morrison was touched by the question, although he thought Maggie a bit naïve and ignorant of politics. “Well, I believe it’s because you all want to tell us what to do.”

“Bunkum,” Maggie replied, borrowing Eli’s slang. “Tell me, Captain, do you have slaves?”

He nodded. “Three. They came to me when my father died two years ago.”

Emily spoke up now. “Do you treat them well?”

“I do.”

“Why?”

He thought. “Well, I don’t know. It just seems the right thing to do, doesn’t it?”

Maggie’s hazel eyes were steady on his. “But why is it the right thing? Is it because it is foolish to ruin your own property? Or is it because they are people?”

The questions surprised him.

“You see our Bible says there is neither slave nor free, that all are one in Christ Jesus. So how do you see them?”

Morrison paused. “The truth?”

Maggie nodded.

He sighed and stared into his teacup. “Ladies, I am a farmer. I’ve worked my own land since I was twenty-one. I am reasonably well-educated and serve my town as a lawyer when there is a need. I have managed to provide for my wife and sons. I didn’t need slaves. My father’s will gave them to me.”

“Why didn’t you let them go free then?” Emily said.

“Manumission in Virginia is a tricky thing. I could free them, but they would have to leave the state within the year or be enslaved once more. Two of them are quite old. Where would they go?”

Emily leaned toward him. “Why don’t you ask them what they want to do?”

“An astute question.” He sipped his tea. “Why don’t I? Well, sad to say, it never occurred to me.” He looked directly into Emily’s eyes. “But perhaps this war will settle things.”

“Perhaps it will,” Emily agreed.

As the day ended, all but the southern-most part of their town had been occupied by the Confederate Army. When Maggie stepped onto the porch that evening for a breath of air, she found the street littered with abandoned backpacks and bedrolls and a dead horse. In the fading light, she could see the bodies of men at the intersection of West and Middle Streets. She wondered why she didn’t feel faint from shock. She would have had every right to swoon.

Morrison’s men came laughing out the door after meeting in the kitchen with the Captain. “Fine dinner, ma’am!” they called and proceeded to lay their bedrolls on the porch.

Maggie was not sure how she should feel about them. These men were the enemy. That much was a fact. But aside from their desire to send Emily South, they did not otherwise seem like a bad sort. They treated her with respect. They were courteous to Emily. They chatted about their families, their “best gals,” and hometowns. It turned out not one of these enlisted men owned a slave. They were all farmers who worked their

own land. The information puzzled her. Why were they fighting then? What were they fighting for?

Captain Morrison walked out onto the porch. He reached into his pocket and drew out a cheroot, which he lit. "This must be difficult for you," he said to Maggie. "I am sorry."

"I wonder if we all aren't sorry."

He nodded in agreement.

At that moment, Maggie spotted the figure of a woman walking north from High Street. Recognizing her, Maggie flew off the porch, crying, "Oh, Liddy! Liddy! Where have you been? I have been half-mad with worry!"

"Don't hug me, Mama," Lydia replied. "I'm afraid I am covered in blood."

Maggie stepped back. "Oh!" Even though she was afraid of the answer, she asked, "Have you been injured?"

"No. I'm fine. I went to the Union School to find a surgeon and ended up observing and assisting him. I'm glad I did. We will need to take part of Private O'Malley's leg tomorrow."

"I see." Maggie forced the thought to the back of her mind and, regardless of the blood on her dress, slipped her arm through Lydia's. "Come and meet our new boarders."

"Do we have more wounded men?" Lydia asked tiredly.

"No. But we are hosting half a dozen Confederate soldiers."

Lydia made a face. "I just hope they're nice."

"Their Captain is. His men are, too, although a little rough-hewn."

"Frankie will explode when she finds out."

Maggie's heart tightened. "She hasn't come home yet, Liddy," she whispered. "I don't know what to do. All I can do is pray for her safety." Her eyes filled with tears.

"Oh, Mama," Lydia breathed and took her into her arms. "We must be brave. Besides, you know Frankie. She may be impulsive, but certainly not stupid."

Maggie laughed faintly, pulled away from her daughter, and produced a handkerchief from the bodice of her dress to wipe her eyes

"Let's say a prayer for Frankie."

Mother and daughter stood in the middle of the street, held hands, and prayed for Frankie's safe return. Only then did they continue to walk toward the house.

As they climbed the steps to the porch, Captain Morrison removed his hat and bowed to Lydia. "You must be Mrs. Lape."

"I am."

"Your mother has told me all about your interest in medicine."

"Thank you. I am a midwife at present, but since I am a widow, I intend to become a doctor."

His face grew somber. "Allow me to extend my deepest condolences on your bereavement, ma'am."

Lydia nodded. "Thank you, Captain. As you may expect this has been a most trying time." She indicated her dress. "Please excuse me but I must change my clothing and try to wash it clean before the blood sets. I have been helping at the hospital at the Union School."

Captain Morrison bowed and watched her walk into the house. "You have quite a strong, independent daughter, Mrs. Smith."

"I do indeed." In the midst of her worry and fear, Maggie felt a flush of pride.

[Meanwhile, with the 6th Corps of the Army of the Potomac suddenly starts packing up and moving north. Eli and Carson, as war correspondents, are with them.]