

## Chapter 1: Not Fragile Flowers

---

### **Maggie Blaine Smith's Journal, 21 December 1863**

It is dark out, about an hour or so until dawn. After feeding the baby, I came to the kitchen to write. This hour is the only time during which I may be alone with my thoughts, and I have many.

Soon we will begin a new year. It amazes me how a journey that started in February has come round full circle. Perhaps I should feel some sense of sadness at leaving Pennsylvania, but I do not. The circumstances of the past year have been strange and frightening. One cannot blame me for wishing to return to more familiar surroundings in Blaineton, New Jersey, despite the fact that conditions there were what spurred our sojourn in the first place.

The battle in and around Gettysburg was the like of which I never wish to experience again. For weeks we lived in dread of an invasion by Confederate forces, then for three days we were surrounded by violence, noise, and destruction. But all that was nothing compared to the shattered men with whom we came into contact. Those who staggered or were dragged to the door of our house were frightful to see and a grim testimony to what men will do to one another.

What to do with these poor, wrecked souls? The burden fell to the citizens of our town. There were so many wounded that every public space seemed dedicated to the care of the wounded from both sides. Many homes, including ours, became hospitals. What else could we do? So it did not matter to us whether they wore blue or butternut. The wounded became our neighbors – poor, frightened, suffering brothers, sons, and husbands of other women.

Those three days were filled with uncertainty and fear. We wondered who would win the battle, whether a shell would blow our house to pieces, whether a bullet or minie ball or artillery shell would fly through a door or window and kill us, whether the men in our care would live or die, and whether we would have enough ether, enough bandages, enough salve, enough laudanum, enough food, enough anything. The list was long.

And then, as if the clash of two armies were not enough, we were visited by an old enemy from Blaineton. My dear friend Emily and I suddenly found ourselves in a situation that we never could have imagined and doing that which would have made us shrink back in horror. But we did it in order to stay alive and preserve our dignity.

Journal, this event compounded by the battle shook my soul to the core. I felt that God had become silent, the same as when death, fear, and anger stalked Blaineton in 1860. But I am made of stern stuff. I did not stop praying. Instead, I clung stubbornly to the promise that the Holy Spirit prays in our stead when we have no words. And at that time, I truly had no words. My heart was too wounded and my senses shattered. Worse of all, the memory of that night with our old enemy would not release me.

It seems to me that this time after the storm of battle has been a waiting time, a time of recovery. In some manner it has been as if we have died and been placed in a tomb to await resurrection. We did not know where we would be led next. We did not know when or if change would happen.

We all have dealt differently with our enforced idleness. Some of us waited like an unmovable rock. Others found or tried to find things to do – a few of which were helpful, several fruitless, and one rather questionable, as it could have led to a very bad end.

As for me, I also waited, for I was expecting a child. And as I waited, I found myself growing along with my little one. It is strange how the words “womb” and “tomb” sound so much alike. They are both dark places – one a place of growth and the other a place of decay. The good news is that Christ’s tomb was not a place of deterioration for him, but a place of resurrection. Since we too are promised a resurrection, both womb and tomb will lead to life for us.

During this time of waiting my fears were buried within me. But in the dark womb of my tomb, I began to shed those fears. I hope that when I finally emerge I shall be free, that we all shall be free of our fears.

\*

**5 July 1863**

### **Gettysburg, Pennsylvania**

Dawn was just breaking. Frankie and Lydia were already up and standing on the porch of the old Smith house.

The two sisters were completely different. Tall and curvy, Lydia was possessed of dark brown hair, brown eyes, a tranquil disposition, and a keen mind. Seventeen-year-old Frances, known to all as Frankie, was thin and a good head shorter than her sister. Her wavy red hair regularly defied all attempts to control it, her green eyes were bright and mischievous, and her comments unpredictable.

“I’m glad Papa’s going to take Mama to Aunt Sarah and Uncle Andrew’s farm,” Lydia said. “She will be able to have clean air and good food there.”

Frankie nodded. “I hope Mama carries this baby to term.”

“She will,” Although five days shy of her twenty-first birthday, Lydia spoke with assurance. She had already gathered experience as a midwife, a doctor’s apprentice, and during the battle of Gettysburg, a surgeon. She also had been a grieving widow clothed in black, but three days of non-stop surgery and patient care had ruined her widow’s weeds. That was when she decided to throw custom aside and began to dress normally and mourn quietly. “Mama’s strong and healthy. She just needs rest.”

Frankie looked around at the devastation on the street. It had been not quite two days since the end of the battle, yet abandoned wagons, soldiers’ belongings, assorted rubbish, a dead horse, and the bloated bodies of several soldiers were still there – all of it accompanied by a dreadful stench.

It amazed Frankie that she no longer found these sights and smells horrifying. In fact, she wondered if she ever would again. It worried her that perhaps she had become hardened to suffering. “Uncle Andrew said that on their way here they saw teams of men removing dead soldiers.” She glanced at her sister. “When do you think they’ll get to our street?”

“These things take time.”

“Time,” Frankie muttered. She had been leaning on the porch railing, but suddenly filled with purpose she now straightened up. “All right. What’s next?”

“I beg your pardon?”

“What do we do next? We have been caring for the wounded. But there are others out there who need our help, Liddy. What should we do next?”

“We’re running a hospital. That is quite a bit. I don’t know what more we can do.”

“We can get more soldiers, for one.”

Lydia looked at her sister as if she were mad. “Are you proposing that we go out onto the battlefields and collect them?”

Frankie straightened her shoulders. “Why not? When Patrick brought me back from the field hospital we saw wounded men lying all over. I heard that some people have been going out to help the soldiers left in the fields. Why can’t we help, too?”

As crazy as it sounded, Lydia realized that her sister was right. Need should result in action. She reflected on how she had responded during the battle. She had seen only one amputation and that while apprenticed to Dr. Lightner back in Blaineton. When some of the wounded in their care needed amputations, she ran to the hospital set up at the Union School and observed a surgeon as he removed a leg. Then she removed an arm as the doctor looked on, more than a little amazed that a woman should undertake such a thing. Thus Lydia was prepared for the inevitable. Armed with the contents of the medical bag given to her by Dr. Lightner and the ether provided by her connection to Adela Edler, a local midwife, Lydia turned the Smith house dining room into an operating theater. With the help of Frankie, her mother Maggie, and others, she struggled to save the lives of the men who came through their door. Lydia learned to work as artillery fire shook the house and the crack-crack of sharp shooters sounded on the streets around them. The needs of the wounded seemed unending and there was little time for niceties. Discarded limbs had been thrown out the window and the men who died in their hospital were quickly moved to the barn. The legs, arms, feet, hands, and bodies had been decently buried in the backyard only the other evening.

Lydia – and all of them – had done what was needed while the battle raged. Hearing about soldiers left in dire straits on the battlefields moved her once again. “You’re right,” she agreed. “It is not over yet. We women might as well pick up the pieces.”

“Like we always do.” Frankie perched on the porch railing. “I don’t believe that the armies have enough doctors to take care of those poor souls.” She sniffed indignantly as she folded her arms. “You know, some people like to think we women are shrinking violets. But that’s bunkum, as Papa says. We’re far from fragile flowers!”

A grim smile crossed Lydia’s face.

“So it’s up to us to heal and clean and put things to right.” Frankie emitted a little sigh. “Only one thing bothers me, Liddy.”

“And that is?” her sister asked, suppressing a smile.

“Have you any idea what day of the week it is?”

Lydia shook her head.

“It’s Sunday! But all the churches are full of wounded so there are no services. This has become a day just like any other day.” Frankie sighed again. “Don’t you miss it? I used to hate Sundays because there was so little to do. But now I understand why the Lord commanded us to rest on the Sabbath. I’m feeling tired.”

“Even flowers need a little water and sun now and then,” Lydia teased.

The sound of a horse’s hooves pounding on the street caught their attention. They looked up to see a Union soldier heading toward their house. Frankie immediately recognized who it was. “Pat!” She flew down the porch steps. “Oh, Pat!”

Tall, dark-haired, blue-eyed Private Patrick McCoy dismounted and wound the reins around the railing. Frankie launched herself straight into his arms, whereupon she gave him an enthusiastic, girlish kiss. They had been courting for a while, but most of that time Patrick had been off in the war, and they missed each other something terrible.

Lydia pretended not to see their greeting. She remembered the one time in two years that she had seen her husband Edgar, and they had greeted each other the same way. Now he was gone. The same might happen to Patrick, so she would not begrudge Frankie one single second with her beau, even if they crossed the line of propriety.

“Got some bad news, honey,” Patrick said as he came up for air. “That’s why I borrowed the horse.”

Eyes wide, Frankie waited.

“Orders came down. Sixth Corps is going after the Confederates. Most of the doctors and those of us assisting at the field hospital have been ordered to follow. So me and my ambulance pals are off again.” Patrick put a hand to his girl’s face. “Gosh, I thought we’d have a bit more time but I guess not. I’m sorry.”

She took a stoic breath. “It’s not your fault. Just be careful, please.”

He nodded.

Frankie leaned in to give him a long, very full kiss. When it ended, the two stood quietly together.

“Gonna miss you,” Patrick said at length.

She smiled. “I shall miss you, too.”

“Eli’s not around, is he?”

“He’s still sleeping. Why are you asking?”

“Because of this.” Grinning, Patrick sought her lips and gave her a slow, loving kiss of his own. “Hope you like long engagements.”

She laughed. “I love them.”

“I plan to go to medical school as soon as I get out of the army.”

“I know and I don’t mind.” She smiled. “I have things I need to do too before we get married.”

“Like what?”

Frankie hesitated. “I’m not completely sure. God’s still revealing that to me. But I’ll know when it happens.”

They looked into each other’s eyes for another long moment until Patrick said, “I gotta go.”

She nodded. “I know. Try not to get hurt.”

“I’ll do my best.”

They kissed one last, tender time. Then Patrick dragged himself away, mounted, and giving her a smile, turned the horse toward the street. Frankie pulled a handkerchief out of her sleeve and waved it as he rode off. The second he disappeared the hankie went straight to her face and she sobbed.

Lydia hurried down the steps. “Are you all right?” She put an arm around her sister’s shoulders.

“No,” Frankie choked. She turned and buried her face on Lydia’s shoulder. “Oh, Liddy!”

Lydia cradled her. “Shh,” she whispered into her sister’s unruly red hair. “All will be well.”

“It wasn’t well for you.”

“No, it wasn’t. But all is well for Edgar. He’s in heaven and nothing is wrong there. And I know that someday all will be well for me and for you – for all of us.” She pulled back to take in Frankie’s face. The sight almost made her laugh – her sister looked exactly as she had as a four-year-old child after an upset. Lydia smoothed a strand of errant hair behind Frankie’s left ear. “Have faith, dearest. Trust God. All will be well.”

Frankie sniffed. “You sound just like Mama.”

Lydia gave her a hug. “I shall take that as a compliment. Now, let’s go inside and check on our wounded visitors.”

\*

After breakfast Maggie, her husband Eli, and Nate and Emily Johnson left for the Millhouse farm, not far from Middletown. Lydia, Frankie and those staying on in Gettysburg wished them well, and then continued with their duties at the hospital.

After they had finished changing the soldiers’ dressings, the two young women repaired to the kitchen. They planned to take loaves of bread and cakes of cornbread to the soldiers on the battlefield. The smell of breakfast’s bacon and freshly-baked bread still hung in the air.

Things had become easier, thanks to the arrival of their cousins Jimmy and Billy Millhouse, as well as the return of Matilda and Chloe Strong, Grandpa O’Reilly, and Chester Carson. On July 4 the new arrivals had brought food – a gift from the Quaker Meeting up near Middletown. It was enough not only for the family and the wounded soldiers, but for the neighbors along West Street. Having six extra people in the house also meant more hands to care for the wounded and to prepare and serve meals.

In the short period between the noon dinner and preparations for supper, Matilda Strong and her daughter Chloe helped Lydia and Frankie pack for their expedition. A tall, powerful woman of African descent, Matilda was rummaging through a cupboard and muttering to herself, “They gonna need water.” She produced two metal cups. These she handed to Frankie. “Take these in case they ain’t got a canteen.” She took a breath. “Lordy, I hope you don’t find nobody alive out there.”

Lydia was checking her basket of food. “I wish that were true, but people have been saying that wounded soldiers are still lying in the fields.”

“Them poor boys. Battle ended two days ago. Ain’t right.”

Chloe looked up from where she was wrapping loaves of bread in napkins. “Mommy, I want to help them. Let me go with them, please.”

“No,” was the firm reply, “You too young.”

“But I saw plenty of wounded when we came into Gettysburg.”

“If what folk say is true, there’s worse outside this town. You ain’t old enough for that!”

Chloe’s dark brown eyes dimmed. If only she were a bit older than 11 – perhaps 14 or 15 years old. But somehow she suspected that her mother would be overprotective regardless of her age. Ever since they had made it to the north and out of slavery, Matilda seemed to have taken a vow never to let Chloe near anything unpleasant or dangerous again. Despite her young age, Chloe accepted this about her mother, but knew that someday Matilda would have no choice but to let her go. She also was well aware of what kind of a world awaited a young woman of color, which made her all the more determined to become as educated and resilient as possible. The plain truth was that Chloe had seen and experienced far more while enslaved on the plantation than her mother would have wanted.

Frankie saw the disappointment in Chloe’s eyes. Knowing too well what it was to be told she was too young for this or that, she spoke up. “Chloe, maybe you could ask Mr. Carson to hitch Fox up to the wagon.”

That made the girl grin. She nodded and happily hurried out the kitchen door.

“It’s a blessing Emily went up to the Millhouse farm with Nate,” Matilda was saying as she cut a pan of cornbread into squares. “She need that time with him and their little Natey. And this

ain't no place for a woman in the family way like Maggie." She clucked softly as she worked. "And Eli – my, oh, my, that man is tired. And if you ask me, Mr. Carson should've gone back with 'em all, too. Me, Chloe, Grandpa, Jimmy, and Billy – we could have handled this. We done nothing but wait during the battle up on that farm with the Millhouse folk." She wrapped the cornbread squares in a piece of cloth and put them in the basket. "We got plenty of strength and some to spare. Don't know why you all bothered to stay. Y'all must be bone weary."

"Not in the least." Frankie plucked a peach from the bowl on the table and took a bite. "We're young and strong."

Matilda sniffed. "More likely you young and foolish, but that ain't none of my business. You grown women. Or nearly so," she appended, giving Frankie a pointed look.

Lydia smiled. "Oh, now, Matilda, you know I'm the physician for our little hospital. It wouldn't do for me to go while the men are still here. And Frankie has experience dressing wounds and caring for soldiers. We need to stay until we no longer have anyone to care for."

"If you say so," the other woman said with a little grunt.

"I do." Lydia put an affectionate arm around Matilda's waist. "But, if you do not mind, while we are gone perhaps you, Chloe, and Grandpa could check on the men every hour or so to see if they need water or food." Lydia turned to Frankie. "I believe we should bring some buckets of water. I don't know what sort we shall find in the streams and ponds." Although she did not say so, she feared that water supplies might be polluted by blood and bodies. Lydia glanced one more time at Matilda. "I do thank you so much for watching over the house while we are gone. Did I tell you how grateful we are to have you here?" With that, she kissed Matilda on the cheek.

"I'm happy to do what I can."

"We shall be home for supper."

"You see you do that," Matilda murmured. "And you be careful."

Once the two young women were in the barnyard, they ran into Carson, who flatly refused to let them drive themselves to the battlefield. One of the benefits – or was it detriments – of boarding house life was the presence of extra aunts and uncles with no family ties whatsoever, other than those of love, who tended to watch over Frankie and Lydia.

A dapper man in his late fifties, Chester Carson had once been a rather well-known author until his career had failed. Penniless, he ended up at Maggie's boarding house and eventually began working for the *Gazette*, Eli's newspaper. An avid photographer he had ventured with Eli into the war and followed the Sixth Corps of the Army of the Potomac. While Eli had written stories about the army, war, and civilians, Carson had photographed the things he saw around him.

"Come along. I shall escort you to the battlefields." His tone indicated such finality that the two sisters climbed resignedly into the wagon. Carson shook the reins and the wagon rattled out of the yard.

"Where do you wish to go?" he asked as they turned south onto West Street.

Lydia frowned. "I am not certain."

"Your stepfather and I saw terrible numbers of dead and wounded as we traveled up Emmitsburg Road. I suggest we take that route."

Carson guided Fox down High Street, turned right onto Baltimore Street and then took the right-hand fork onto Emmitsburg Road.

Carson's assessment had been correct. As they traveled, it became apparent that the farmland and homes south of Gettysburg had suffered unimaginable damage from the fighting.

Fences had been torn down, crops destroyed, trees splintered, and barns and homes marred or ruined outright. They were in a landscape of utter devastation. Dead horses and the bodies of men, as well as ruined and abandoned equipment, were strewn everywhere they looked. A few patrols had just begun the grim job of burying the bloated, broken bodies, but the enormity of the task was overwhelming.

The stench of death hung powerfully in the air, forcing Lydia to put a handkerchief to her mouth. Frankie coughed, gagged, and eventually resorted to covering her mouth and nose, too, while Carson stoically refused to give in.

As they rattled over the pitted road, they suddenly heard a faint voice calling for help. Lydia leapt out of the wagon and hurried in the direction of the call. Some yards into the field, she squatted by what appeared to be a body and shouted, "Here!"

Frankie immediately came trotting over with a basket. She found Lydia kneeling beside a bloodied young Confederate soldier trapped beneath the bodies of two other men.

"We need help getting these soldiers off him."

Frankie turned and gestured to Carson, who sprang from the wagon. He and Frankie each grabbed an arm of the dead soldier on top and, holding their breath due to the stench, pulled him off the living man and laid him down some feet away. Then they returned to do the same to the other dead soldier.

The young man grimaced as the heavy weight was removed.

Lydia laid a reassuring hand on his arm. "It's all right now." She looked up at Frankie and Carson. "He needs food and water." She passed a canteen to her sister. "If you would, please fill this from our buckets."

Frankie hesitated long enough to watch Lydia kindly touch the young man's face and ask, "Where are you injured?" The question was not really necessary for the soldier's left trouser leg was soaked in blood. Frankie knew that Lydia was simply being kind and attempting to put him at ease. She ran to the wagon, as the boy said, "My leg. I got hit and fell. Next thing I knew I had two other men on me. I couldn't move."

"Don't worry. You're safe now." Lydia lifted her skirt and began ripping apart the lower section of her petticoat. Carson politely averted his eyes.

Frankie had returned with the filled canteen. "Oh, Liddy!" she gasped. "It's your last one."

"Petticoats are nothing. They can easily be replaced." She took the canteen from her sister's hand, lifted the man's head, and let him take a little water. Then she tipped the canteen over the petticoat scrap, dampened it, and tenderly began to clean his face of blood and mud. "How long have you been here?"

"Reckon three days. Ain't had no food, no water. Thought I was a goner."

"Well, you're not!" Frankie ripped a piece from one of the loaves of bread and held it out. "We're going to feed you up!"

The soldier's hand was shaking badly as he reached to take the bread. Frankie steadied it and helped him bring the morsel to his mouth. "What's your name?"

"Lieutenant Caleb O'Connor."

Across the field, another weak voice called, "Help! We need water, too."

Frankie stood and, following the voice, picked her way through the dead. Within a minute or so she had located two more soldiers.

Lydia glanced up at Carson. "Would you please bring the wagon as close as you can?"

Carson nodded and left. Once he had climbed aboard the wagon, he carefully began to weave the vehicle through the maze of dead bodies. He had to go about 100 yards out of his way to find a clear path, but finally pulled up within six feet of the injured Confederate.

Lydia looked up as he walked over. "How many do you think we can fit in our wagon?"

"It depends upon how many we have to transport, my dear."

"We've three so far."

Carson thought a moment as he surveyed the ruins of the battlefield. "It depends upon their injuries, too. I imagine that anyone here is seriously hurt and unable to walk. But I believe that we can transport perhaps five or six."

The young woman nodded. "Let's take them if they can be moved without creating further injury."

"We have a blanket in the wagon. Perhaps I can fashion a litter." With that, Carson went off in search of something with which he could create poles for a makeshift litter.

In the end, the two sisters located four wounded soldiers, all Confederates, and gave each water, bread, and corn bread. As they did, Carson found two long pieces of wood, which he set by the wagon. He then hopped in and felt around under the seat. When he emerged, he had a tool kit in his hand. He brought it and the blanket over to the wood and set to work, using a hammer and nails to attach the blanket to the poles.

When the litter was ready, he dragged it to the soldier with the leg wound and squatted beside him. "This will not be pleasant," he said quietly. "But it is necessary in order to move you to a place where you may receive care."

"Do what you gotta," the soldier replied.

Carson gave the boy's shoulder a pat. "There's a stout fellow."

Although they all tried their best to be gentle it was clear that they caused him pain as they picked him up and placed him on the litter. The boy gritted his teeth and moaned once or twice, but refused to tell them to stop. After he had been laid in the wagon, the trio went off to fetch the other soldiers.

Once all the men were settled, Lydia led Frankie and Carson some feet away from their charges. "I should have brought some tincture of laudanum with me to ease their pain. It's something to remember should we come out again."

Carson's blue eyes were steady on hers. "How bad are their wounds?"

"The one we found first has quite a bad leg injury. His wound has worms and is festering. I may have to amputate. Another soldier has a wound to the back. I fear he may not live long, but I cannot in good conscience leave him here to die. Another has a shattered ankle and an arm wound. The last one took a bullet to his abdomen and his arm. He has not bled out from the abdominal wound, but I fear he too may not survive."

Frankie fought the urge to cry. "Well, at least they'll die clean and in a quiet place. Where in the house shall we put them?"

"The front parlor. We can move the men who are in there now. We'll work out how to do that once we get back." With a wave of her hand, Lydia indicated for the party to return to the wagon.

It was well past eleven o'clock at night when Frankie finally made her way to the kitchen and plopped exhaustedly onto a chair.

"Would you like some tea?" a familiar voice asked.

She looked up to find Gideon Opdyke balancing on a crutch. Like the Smith family, he hailed from Blaineton, New Jersey. His life, though, was far different from Frankie's. Gideon's older brother Lemuel frequently forced him to go astray and got him in all manner of mischief and at times outright evil – such as when Lemuel's gang had burned down Maggie's boarding house and Eli's newspaper office. When it became clear that the town's sheriff knew who had committed the arson, Lemuel had dragged Gideon off to Virginia and made him enlist with him in the Confederate Army.

Now Lemuel was dead and gone. And Gideon, wounded in battle, had decided to desert. Thanks to Eli, he now wore civilian clothing and had been removed from the other wounded soldiers. Gideon made his new home in the back parlor, which he shared with Frankie's younger cousins.

"You're going to give me tea?" Frankie teased. "When you're on crutches?"

"Crutch," he corrected as he limped to the stove. "And yes, I'm going to give you tea."

Once upon a time Gideon had had a massive crush on Frankie, despite the fact that she already had a beau in Patrick McCoy. But of late he had shifted to feelings that one might have for a dear sister. He still liked Frankie, but told himself that he no longer wanted to marry her.

Frankie leaned back in her chair. "I am, as Matilda would say, bone weary."

Gideon poured hot water into a tea pot and added some leaves to steep. "You and Lydia are just like your mother – always picking up strays."

"They were wounded, Gideon! We're going to go out again tomorrow. It's a good thing Papa, Mama, and the Johnsons went to Uncle Andrew and Aunt Sally's farm. Now we have the room to hold the three men from the front parlor and maybe more. It helps to keep the more seriously wounded on the first floor."

"Why?" Gideon fetched a cup and saucer from the cupboard.

Frankie looked astounded. "So we can get water and food to them. And if they need surgery, they don't have to be carried downstairs. It's also simpler to keep an eye on them on the first floor."

Gideon seemed amused at this. "You and your sister ought to run a hospital!"

"We are running one. It's just in a house. Do you know that we have twenty-five people living here right now? And sixteen of them are wounded soldiers?"

Gideon laughed. "Seventeen, counting me." He brought the cup and saucer to her and returned for the teapot.

"Don't say that too loudly. We want to get you out of here and back to New Jersey." Frankie watched him as he went back to the stove to fetch the teapot. "Gideon, what would happen to you if you had stayed in uniform?"

"I suppose I'd be sent to a prison camp soon as I was well enough."

This made Frankie sit up. "But that's cruel! You mean we would have got you well just so they could put you in prison?"

"Well, yeah."

"Will they do that to the other Confederates?"

"What do you expect will happen to them, you little goose? Give 'em a welcome to the North party and invite them to marry our girls?"

She pouted. "Why not?"

"Why not? You ever hear of the enemy? We're at war."

"We ought to be exchanging prisoners."

"We were until the C.S.A.<sup>1</sup> refused to exchange colored Union soldiers."

Frankie frowned. "I know that but –"

"There's no 'but' here, Frankie. It's not happening. Anyway, the point is if the Union army finds out I was with the Rebs, I'd be in a prison camp even though I'm from New Jersey. I'm the enemy so far as they're concerned."

"It's still not right."

He laughed. "No, it isn't. But it's war."

Frankie contemplated her empty cup for a moment. "I wonder when all this madness in Gettysburg will come to an end? Matilda and Chloe baked and cooked all day just to feed everyone. They no more finish cleaning up from dinner than they have to start the preparations for supper. Thank goodness Aunt Becky's Meeting brought food! But one little Quaker Meeting can't feed everybody. We need the Sanitary Commission." She smiled tiredly at her friend. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't complain."

"It's all right. You've been carrying an awful burden." Gideon got a tea cup and saucer for himself. "And Liddy spent all afternoon in the dining room cleaning those poor fellas' wounds." He returned to the table, set his cup and saucer down, and took a seat as Frankie poured tea into her cup. "I heard Jimmy helped her."

Frankie nodded. "Mr. Carson and I did, too. You have to have a strong stomach." She took Gideon's cup, filled it, and pushed it toward him.

"The wounds were bad, huh?"

"Dreadful. And the smell! That's what gets you. I almost got sick and poor Cousin Jimmy did get sick. We had to send him to the back parlor to lie down."

Gideon shook his head. "Poor pup. He's only fourteen. I could have helped, you know. It would've spared Jimmy losing his dinner."

"No. You shouldn't be on that leg for too long." Frankie sipped her tea. "We thought the soldier we found first might have to have his leg amputated below the knee. But when we got him back here and were able to clean his wound, Lydia realized that there was no damage to the bone."

"That's good. How are the others doing?"

"The fellow with the back wound is very low. He probably won't live through the night. Liddy is sitting with him now. The man with what we thought was an abdominal wound seems to be doing well. After Liddy had a chance to clean and examine him, she discovered that the bullet had only passed through his side. His arm wound was festering, but it has been cleaned and we put a poultice on it to draw out the infection. The man with the shattered ankle might have to lose his foot, though. It all depends upon how he heals."

"Ye gods," Gideon sighed, having picked the phrase up from Carson. "What a mess."

Frankie thought about Patrick. For a moment she felt the desire to cry, but pushed it away by taking a sip of tea. She drank too much too quickly and it nearly scalded her throat. Still, it did the trick. She did not cry. "Yes, ye gods."

"What's all this chattering in the kitchen?" a voice with an Irish accent demanded.

Frankie grinned. "Join us for some tea, Grandpa!"

Her adopted grandfather entered and took a seat at the table. "Decent people should be in their beds by now, not wagging their tongues in the middle of the night."

Grandpa O'Reilly, a wiry but spry man in his early 70s, was another of Maggie's "strays." The indigent Irish immigrant had come to the door of the Second Street Boarding House begging for a crust of bread. Instead Maggie had given him a full supper and a clean bed – and then took him into her family. Thus Grandpa discovered a new life and a new family, and he loved it.

"If these were decent times, we would be in bed." Frankie hopped up to get him a cup and saucer.

"That's true, darlin'. So long as we're gossiping in the middle of the night, let me tell you what I saw today." He took the cup and saucer from Frankie and reached for the teapot. "I went to the Catholic Church to see if I could help and found some nuns working with the wounded. They and a priest had newly arrived from Emmitsburg. Bless their hearts they came to provide nursing for the hospitals here. Some of the nuns are even serving as doctors, just like our Liddy. These are good, brave women – as befits brides of Christ. It will change how people look at Catholics, mark my word."

Frankie sighed as she sat back down. "God bless 'em."

"God bless us all," Gideon added.