

Chapter 1: Home

Maggie's Journal, 28 December 1863

I have not written since shortly after Faith's birth. A new baby always turns life topsy-turvy, and our little Fay has done what babies do so well, thus I have had little time.

Strange, is it not, Journal? Our Lord calls us to love others as we love ourselves, but my home and Eli's print shop were burned to the ground and we were run out of town precisely because we loved others, even escaped slaves. Sometimes doing as Jesus commands brings not accolades and good will, but rather hatred and anger.

It seems foolish now to have believed that Gettysburg would be a safe place. The battle brought unimaginable death and destruction to the town and the surrounding fields. Our house became a field hospital for the wounded. My Lydia, because she had learned medicine from Dr. Lightner in our hometown, put her medical knowledge to good use and became our hospital's doctor.

Most of the soldiers regardless of where they came from were courteous and grateful for their care. But one member of the Confederate army, our former neighbor, and nemesis, Lemuel Opdyke, also showed up in our house. I need not go into the horror of that night. It is difficult to write about, let alone think of. But I will say this: had Emily not got hold of Grandpa's pistol, I surely would have done the deed with a poker from the fireplace. May God forgive me for my thoughts and our deeds

All of us have been damaged by this war. I see it in Emily's eyes and in the way her husband Nate hovers over her as if his attention will erase her sense of guilt at having taken a life. I see it in my husband, who wakes frequently from nightmares, falls into troubled silence, and is overly protective of me. I see it in Mr. Carson, who pretends to be above the war's effects but whose eyes often have a faraway look. I hear it in Grandpa O'Reilly's weary sighs, for violence has come to haunt him in his old age as it once had haunted him as a youth in Ireland. My daughter Lydia mourns the loss of her husband Edgar, who died at Salem Church in Virginia. And even my dear Frances displays despair now and then. Heaven only knows what the war is doing to her beau Patrick.

Lastly, I see the damage in myself, in my occasional bad dreams and in my memories that refuse to fade. It seems no one, no matter how valiant or strong, is able to escape the effects of this war. I only hope and pray that our return home will be a tonic, for all of us badly need quiet and tranquility.

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28 December 1863

Eli Smith was inside the house. It had been eerily quiet until someone or something began to keen. He frowned. That had never happened before. Who or what would make a noise like that? And why? He went down the hall and as he did, his heart began to pound and his breath came short.

He'd been there before. He knew what he would see. But he opened the front door anyway.

Outside was a horrifying sight. People, horses, and wrecked wagons were strewn everywhere. Knees shaking, Eli stepped onto the porch. He hated this place. Even though it resembled his old family home in Gettysburg, it was completely alien at the same time. It was his fear made manifest and palpable.

I don't want to look, he thought, squeezing his eyes shut. *Don't make me look.*

But he knew he had to. He had to see it.

He turned to his right and his breath left him.

His stepdaughter Frankie was collapsed in a rocking chair. The chair was still, though. That was because she was dead.

The haunting keening started all over again. It raised the hair on the back of his neck. What was making that noise? It couldn't be a good sign. Its newness, its otherworldliness caused panic to rise up.

Oh, God! Make it stop! Make it stop!

Eli shut his eyes again and clapped his hands over his ears.

And then, suddenly, there was a strange rustling sound and something moved, brushing his right arm.

Eli's eyes shot open in panic. It was pitch-black. He could still hear that God-awful wailing, though, and his heart thumped against his ribs. Oh, God, where was he? Was he dead? Was this hell?

He was startled next by the sound of scratching. It was short and sharp, like someone striking a match. The noise was followed by the smell of sulfur and a yellow glow gradually grew, splitting the darkness.

In the dim light from what he now realized was a lamp, Eli saw Maggie walk across the room. Breathing heavily, he tried to work things out. What was she doing walking around? He managed to croak, "Maggie?"

"It's all right, love. I've got her."

Got who?

Then he saw his wife bend and lift something up. It was Faith, his daughter, their beautiful little girl. He watched as a smiling Maggie cradled the wailing baby.

That's it, Eli thought. *That's the keening noise!*

Was this a dream? Was the other a dream? Which thing was real?

Eli drew a shaky breath.

"Shh," Maggie was cooing to Faith as she returned to the bed. "Just because Papa slept through your cries, you needn't be angry." Propping up her pillows, she settled against them and placed the baby upon her stomach. Once she opened her gown, she brought Faith to her exposed breast. The infant immediately stopped crying and, latching on, began to suck. Maggie smiled. "All is right now, isn't it?" When she glanced at Eli, she saw that he was breathing rapidly. "What's wrong, love?"

"Another dream," he said.

Reaching out, she caressed his arm. "The same one?"

"Yeah."

Maggie said nothing but kept her hand on his arm.

Eli squeezed his eyes shut. "I hate this damn war." He wanted to say "God-damned war," because there was no way war ever could be God-blessed. But he knew his wife would disapprove of using God's name in vain, so he softened the expletive to a simple "damn." Tears burned his eyes. "What's wrong with me, Maggie? Why do I keep having this nightmare over and over again?"

"I don't know," Maggie patted the space beside her. "Come and snuggle up."

Her husband edged over. Propping himself up on an elbow, Eli touched Faith as she squirmed and sucked and stared up at her mother. The five-week-old infant was blessedly warm. He had no doubt now that this was the reality and the other had been a nightmare. No, not just *a* nightmare, but *the* nightmare.

He and Maggie were in the sleeping compartment of her brother Samuel Beatty's private car. Their train was laying over at a station. The other members of their family and friends from the old boarding house were in the rest of the car. They had left Pennsylvania to return to Maggie's hometown of Blaineton, New Jersey. Eli had been offered a job there as editor-in-chief of the town's new newspaper, *The Register*.

Relieved, he moved over, pressed his lips to his daughter's head and inhaled deeply of her scent. "I've seen too much, Maggie. I've seen the damned elephant."

"Try not to use that word, please."

"Which one?" he teased. "Elephant?"

"You know what I mean."

"Maybe things will get better once I start working."

"I'm praying it will."

"That's what I like about you. You always pray even when you don't get an answer."

She smiled gently. "Well, what else is there to do?"

Having suffered the loss of his newspaper from the same blaze that devoured Maggie's boarding house, and having been fired as a *New-York Times* correspondent, Eli knew he needed to make good. Tryphena Moore, the richest lady in town, hoped that having him at the helm of the *Register* would create "controversy of the best kind" to counterbalance what she called the "copperhead rubbish" of the *Messenger*, a paper in nearby Rivertown. Her one caveat was for Eli to control his more radical language and viewpoints. Miss Moore wanted earnest, honest stories, not a riot – and certainly not another arson fire, especially at her newspaper's office.

When the baby had finished with one breast, Maggie passed her to Eli to be burped. Eli laid Faith on his shoulder and tenderly patted her back. The small, homely activity brought him closer to his child. She was so small and so dependent on him. He had to turn the disasters of the past into something good and hopeful.

Eli knew his recurring nightmare had its roots in his travels with the Sixth Corps of the Army of the Potomac and flashes of memory from Gettysburg. Still, its very repetition worried him and he wondered if perhaps he was not going mad.

No more adventures, he lectured himself. You're getting older. You need to provide for your family. You have responsibilities. No more chasing scoops.

Faith issued a prodigious burp.

"Egad!" Eli laughed. "You're nearly as loud as I am!" He returned their daughter to Maggie, who set the baby to nurse on the opposite breast. With a sigh, he eased himself onto his back. "At least, we'll be home tomorrow."

"We will," Maggie said, "and then we can all breathe. I'll put Faith to bed when she's finished, Eli. You go to sleep and dream only of pleasant things this time."

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28 December 1863

Somewhere around 4 a.m., Eli and Maggie's six-year-old son Bob had left his compartment and invaded their room to spend the rest of the night with them. The boy had been through upheaval, too, and having awakened in a strange place, it was no surprise he should seek his parents for comfort. About three hours later, the train chugged out of Reading Depot and continued its journey to New Jersey.

Awakened by the train's movement, Maggie rose and tended to their stirring daughter, while Eli saw that Bob was washed and dressed. Eventually, he ushered the boy out to have breakfast.

The others in the car had already arisen. The sleeping compartments had been converted to seats and tables for the day. Sam Beatty had been impressed by a drawing of Pullman's 1859 sleeping car and, since he traveled frequently to Washington and New York, purchased a car and had it made to his specifications. It had eight rows of seats, four on each side. These were arranged in pairs so passengers could face one another and converse over the table, upon which they would dine three times a day. At night, the compartments overhead would be let down. One mattress would be removed and placed across the lower seats and table, while the other would remain in the roomy overhead compartment. The porter then would make up the beds, untie the privacy curtains from the stanchions beside each seat, and the passengers could climb into bed for a night's sleep.

One end of the car had a stove to provide heat and on which the chef could cook. Directly behind it was the larder, with its food, supplies, and cupboards full of china, glasses, silverware, and napkins. There also was a small sink in which the cook and the porter could wash up after a meal.

A necessary with a wash stand was at the other end of the car. The first day of their trip Eli had spent a good half-hour convincing Bob that it was safe to do his business on the wooden outhouse style box while the rails raced by underneath. "It's exhilarating," he told the hesitant boy. "You'll feel a refreshing breeze on your ass."

"Mama says to call it a derriere," Bob replied with a pouty lip.

"Look, son," the exasperated father sighed, "you can't hold it in for the whole trip. Just have a seat and get it out. You'll be fine. I'll stay with you the whole time."

Eventually, Bob complied.

Directly behind the necessary was a large compartment that contained a bed, wash stand, and two upholstered chairs, all of which had been bolted to the floor. This was where Sam and his wife stayed while en route. Eli found it ostentatious but was glad to provide Maggie with some comfort. The room also solved the problem of where to put Faith. They tied her portable sleeping basket securely to the legs of the bed so it would not move while the train travelled.

Maggie's daughters from her marriage to the late John Blaine now occupied one set of seats in the main compartment. Twenty-one year old Lydia, tall, dark-haired and curvy, was sharing a joke with her sister Frankie. The lithe, red-haired seventeen-year-old giggled and then poured Lydia a cup of coffee. Coffee was a rarity during wartime, so the two made a point to enjoy every drop.

Across the way from them sat writer and editor Chester Carson and wiry Jim "Grandpa" O'Reilly, also chatting over cups of coffee. Carson and Grandpa, former tenants at Maggie's boarding house, had forged a familial relationship with her, as had Patrick McCoy, Frankie's beau, who currently was serving in the Union army medical corps.

The final part of the old boarding house family was comprised of the Johnsons. Good-natured, determined Nate had been born free in New Jersey, while his patient, wise wife Emily had been brought north by her mother on the Underground Railroad.

Their son Nathaniel, nicknamed “Natey,” sat beside his mother. He would turn three years old in February, old enough not to need hand-feeding but still young enough to make a mess of himself and everything around him. Emily was attempting to give him the independence he needed even as she tried to keep most of his breakfast from falling onto his lap or the train’s floor.

Porter Lewis Yardley emerged from the car’s small kitchen, expertly balancing himself against the train’s movement as he carried a silver coffee pot down the aisle. He paused by Nate and Emily’s table to refresh their cups. They invited him to sit down and rest, but he noticed Eli and Bob sliding into a set of seats.

“Let me wait on them,” Lewis said softly. “Then I might be able to come and sit for a bit.” He left the Johnsons and approached Eli’s table. “Good morning, sir. How are you and your boy this fine day?”

“We’re quite well, thank you.” Eli never knew exactly what to do when someone wanted to wait on him. He would have been far more comfortable if Lewis simply had pointed him in the direction of the larder and told him to help himself. But this was Samuel Beatty’s private car and Eli had to play by Sam’s rules.

“We are serving bacon, eggs, biscuits, toast, and potatoes this morning, Mr. Smith.”

“Call me, Eli, please.”

“Oh, now, you know I can’t do that, sir.”

“As you wish.” Eli sat back in the seat and smiled mischievously. “The menu sounds more than adequate, *Mr. Yardley.*”

Lewis held back a smile. “Will you take coffee with your breakfast?”

“Coffee! I should say so. I haven’t had any of that since I was in the field with the Sixth Corps. Yes, thank you! I’ll have coffee with cream and sugar, please.”

“And the young man?” Lewis inquired.

“My son...” He loved saying that. He never thought he would have a little boy and was delighted when he and Maggie had adopted Bob. “My son will take a plate as well, although please reduce the potatoes by half.”

“How come?” Bob asked.

“Because you might not eat them all. I know you can eat the eggs and bacon, but probably not a mound of potatoes.”

Bob looked pouty.

Eli leaned across the table. “Now Bobby,” he said soothingly, “if you clean your plate and are still hungry, then I’m sure Mr. Yardley wouldn’t mind bringing you more, but we don’t want to waste food.”

“I would be happy to bring him more if he wishes,” Lewis said.

“There! Mr. Yardley agrees. Do we have a deal, Bobby?”

The boy nodded.

Eli turned to Lewis. “And for a beverage my son will have a glass of milk.”

Once the new arrivals had been served, Lewis took advantage of the lull to visit with the Johnsons. He slid into the seat beside Nate. “That Mr. Smith,” he said quietly, “he’s a little on the different side, isn’t he?”

“That’s putting it mildly.” Nate laughed as Emily gave him a frown.

“He doesn’t seem to have any use for custom,” Lewis said.

“Well, he *is* a Quaker,” Emily commented.

“He’s not a Quaker,” Nate corrected. “He’s an ex-Quaker *and* a free-thinker.”

Emily sniffed. “He *thinks* he’s a free-thinker. Likes to pretend he has no use for religion and such.” She leaned toward Lewis and whispered, “Quakers don’t like to call folk ‘Mister’ or ‘Miss’ or ‘Missus.’ They use both names instead. For instance, I’d call

you Lewis Yardley all the time. But Eli, he goes one step further than his Quaker kin. He prefers to call folk by their first name as if they're family. He's peculiar that way."

Lewis chuckled. "When I told him I'd only call him Mr. Smith, he took to calling me, Mr. Yardley!" He sat back as Emily poured a cup of coffee and nudged it in his direction. "Thank you kindly."

"Cream?" she asked.

"No, ma'am. I prefer it black." He took a sip then commented, "You all said you were family. How on earth did that happen?"

Nate laughed. "I think you can see we're not blood kin. But we're every bit as close as family."

"It happened over time," Emily said. "I went to work for Maggie – Mrs. Smith – back before she married Mr. Smith. That first year, on Christmas Day, she and her girls walked down to our place on Depot Street to bring us some things they'd baked. Of course, that meant she saw where we lived. It wasn't much more than a shack."

Nate added, "Some of the folks on that street didn't take kindly to our presence and my carpentry shop. They tried to burn us out."

"Tried?" Emily sniffed. "They burned half our place down! And there we were in this drafty, burned over shack with the winter wind sneaking in through the chinks in the walls. Well, Maggie saw we couldn't keep on living there, so she invited us to live with her at the boarding house. She had two extra rooms upstairs in the new wing, and said we could use one as our bedroom and the other as a sitting room." Emily smiled at the memory. "I didn't know what to think."

Nate nudged Lewis. "But I did, especially after Maggie told us we could have the rooms free and clear and she'd continue paying Emily's wages. Would you say no to that?"

Lewis said, "I surely would not."

"Maggie's a good woman," Emily told him. "She doesn't just say we should do unto others, she *does* it. She doesn't care that we have dark skin. We're people to her. The only folk she *doesn't* like are hypocrites and those who hate for no good reason. But I've even seen her try her best to love them, too."

Nate continued with the story. "For some years, Emily and I had been part of the Underground Railroad, what with Emily's mama using it to find her way north. We wanted to give back, so we started escorting folk from Blaineton to the Delaware River. From there they'd take a boat north to the next station. One day we decided it was safe to take Eli and Maggie into our confidence. They wanted to help, so the four of us got the idea to build a hiding place, something bigger and safer than a hidey hole down by the river. We ended up putting it right between Maggie's cellar and Eli's print shop."

"Didn't anybody know you had an Underground Railroad stop?"

"No, because it actually was *underground*." Chuckling, Nate sat back. "See, there was this old tunnel between Maggie's house and the outbuilding where Eli had his print shop. That old outbuilding was a laundry or servant quarters or some such. The tunnel ran only a short distance between those two places, but when the snow piled up in the winter I guess someone figured it was good to have a tunnel. We dug out some space in the middle of it for a room and put a pipe up so folks there could get fresh air."

Lewis sat back in his seat. "That's quite a story."

"The Smiths aren't what you call regular white people," Nate said.

Emily primly took a sip of coffee. "They're true disciples."

Nate hooted. "I'm not sure Eli would want to hear that!"

Emily stiffened. "Well, *I* think he's a disciple. He just won't admit it because he likes everything rational."

"Yeah, but Maggie's gonna pray him to God yet," Nate teased.

She turned to wipe Natey's face. "I hope she does it. I truly do."

"I'll be sure to tell him that."

Eyes wide, Emily shot back, "Don't you dare!"

Nate and Lewis laughed loudly, causing Eli and Bob to turn and stare at them. Emily giggled and all three ducked their heads and tried to stifle their merriment.

Eli teased, "Are you talking about me?"

"No!" They chorused and started laughing all over again.

"Now I *know* they're talking about me." Eli gave Bob a wink as Maggie arrived at their table.

"Good morning, sweetheart." Eli struggled to his feet and indicated the seat across the table from him. "Please join us."

"Good morning, Maggie," Emily sang out.

Maggie waved. "Good morning!"

Lewis walked over to get her order. "Hello, Mrs. Smith. May I tell you what we have for breakfast?"

She saw Eli's plate. "No need. I would enjoy having the same as Mr. Smith if you please.

"What would you like as a beverage, ma'am?"

"Some tea, I think, with cream."

"And a glass of milk," Eli added.

Maggie stifled a sigh. Now that the baby had arrived, her husband was more concerned about her diet than she was. She smiled at Lewis. "Yes, I'll have a glass of milk, too."

"Very good, ma'am."

As the porter disappeared into the kitchen, Maggie shook out her napkin and draped it over her lap. "Really, Elijah, I would have remembered the milk eventually."

"Just want to make sure you're well-nourished."

"Trust me. Fay will not be ill-fed."

Eli glanced at his wife's breasts. They were bigger and rounder than he'd ever seen them. "Oh, it's more than obvious she won't go hungry."

"You're such a silly man," she sighed, then wrinkled her nose at Bob, saying, "Isn't Papa a silly man?"

Grinning, Bob nodded.

"Where is our little miracle, by the way?" Eli asked as he buttered a piece of toasted bread.

"Sound asleep. The movement of the train is as soothing as a cradle." Maggie looked enviously at Eli's toast. He had spread on a generous layer of butter, and the bread was thick and hearty. Before she could stop herself, her tongue flickered quickly over her lips.

Eli noticed. "Why don't you take this, sweetheart?" He held the toast out to her.

"Thank you." Maggie eagerly received the slice and tried not to wolf it down. Pregnancy had left her hungry all the time. Now nursing was having the same effect.

"Must be good," he joked.

"Mm," she said.

Eli observed her. "You're losing some of the weight you gained, but I don't understand how that can happen when you eat as much as you did when you were expecting."

“Nursing,” she said around a mouthful of bread. She swallowed. “And housework.”

“Hm...” Eli considered her revelation. “Now that’s a thought. Maybe *I* should try —”

“Housework,” she finished for him.

He laughed. “Really, Maggie, I wasn’t going to say nursing! I’m not physically equipped.”

“I think we should change the topic. Little pitchers have big ears.” She took another bite of bread.

Eli glanced at their son. Maggie was right, as always. The boy really did not need to be part of a discussion about nursing, even though he was privy to the act behind closed doors.

Minutes later, Lewis arrived with a plate of food and Maggie immediately set about eating.

“Don’t wolf it down, sweetheart,” Eli said. “The food isn’t going anywhere.”

Maggie sat back. “I’m sorry. I’m just so very hungry this morning.”

“Don’t worry, Mama. Papa tells me to stop eating so fast, too,” Bob offered.

“I think perhaps Papa’s becoming a worrywart.”

“It’s my job,” Eli replied. “*Paterfamilias*, protector, provider, remember? I’m a mass of fatherly and husbandly feelings.”

She grinned. “You are indeed.”

“I’m serious. Don’t make light of my paternal nature. You’ll hurt my pride.”

Maggie giggled, which made him wonder what she had been like as a schoolgirl. “Oh, woman,” he teased, “thee is crushing my very soul with thy laughter.”

Bob giggled. “You’re silly, Papa!”

“Fay thinks so, too. Laughs every time she sees me. Wonder why that is?”

“Cause you make funny faces!”

“Oh, you mean, like this?” Eli twisted his face into a grimace and reached out for his son with claw-like hands.

Bob cringed, laughing all the while. “Don’t touch me!”

“Why? What’s wrong?”

“You’re going to tickle me!”

“How do you know?”

“Your hands!”

“My hands?” Eli looked at his contorted fingers. “Oh, yeah, I’ve got tickle fingers!” And he proceeded to tickle his son’s ribs.

Maggie watched the scene, grateful that Eli was a good father. She always knew he would be kind and affectionate with his children, but his ability to become a child when he played with Bob had taken her by surprise.

After a few seconds, she said, “All right, Papa. You had better stop now. The others are starting to stare.”

Eli craned his neck to meet the amused gaze of friends and family. “Oh, yeah? I dare any of you to come over!”

Lydia and Frankie exchanged quick glances then flew from their seats and began to tickle their half-brother, who by now had escaped his father and was standing in the aisle.

“Anyone else?” Eli challenged as his son and stepdaughters shrieked with joy. “Anyone want to tickle *me*?”

“Egad, Elijah,” Carson said, with a touch of feigned revulsion. “Never!”

Grandpa added, “Aye, I’ll have none of that, thank you very much.”

Before Emily could stop him, Natey impulsively slid under the table and raced into the aisle. Nate, however, intercepted his son and a tickling match erupted between the two.

Emily glanced wearily at Lewis. "Those two men... they're just big boys."
"I agree," the porter said with a smile. "More coffee?"

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Blaineton, New Jersey

The train pulled into town three hours after lunch. Frankie, who had been peering out the window, turned to the others in the car. "I see Uncle Samuel, Aunt Abigail, and Miss Moore!"

She was joined by Lydia and Emily. As all three began to wave, the train jerked unexpectedly to a halt, throwing all of them back into their seats. After a surprised pause, the trio burst into giggles.

Maggie was as excited and as giddy as her daughters and closest friend. Glad to be home after a long year, she scarcely could contain herself. She cuddled the baby in her arms. "You're going to grow up where Mama and your sisters grew up, Faith," she whispered. "This will be your home."

Blaineton, like most towns, was not free of perils and difficulties: censure, gossip, threats, and even violence had occurred there. *But this time*, Maggie thought as she stroked Faith's soft cheek, *we have an ally in Miss Moore. And this time, your Papa will have the helm of a newspaper.* She smiled down at her baby. "You'll love it here, Faith."

Maggie flashed a smile at her husband next. He returned a rather forced one of his own. But when she mouthed, "I love you" to him, it transformed his smile into something genuine and warm. Once she looked away, though, Eli lost his grin.

He was nervous and couldn't help but worry as he watched his family begin to depart the train. In fact, he waited until the last minute before stepping out onto the platform and into a new life.

It suddenly felt as if everything was resting on his shoulders. His new position was going to be a challenge. Although the portly man was saddled with spectacles and forced to get around with the help of a walking stick, he possessed a strong sense of humor and loved to joke. In short, he was nothing at all like the stereotypical editor-in-chief. Eli was far from being stern, demanding, and tough. In fact, he wondered if he had what it took to be robust enough to oversee reporters and other employees.

Luckily, his worries faded the instant he saw Maggie greeting her brother, sister-in-law and Miss Moore. There were smiles and hugs and kisses all around and everyone was exclaiming over baby Faith. His family was happy to be back in New Jersey. He had made at least one right decision. He had brought them all home.

"Oh!" Abigail gushed. "Isn't Faith beautiful?"

Eli puffed up like a pigeon now and grinned even wider as Samuel said to Bob, "Well, well, well! Welcome back, young man. You've grown since I saw you last!" He held his hand out.

The six-year-old gravely took his uncle's hand and shook. "Thank you, sir."

Bob was an intelligent, compassionate, and determined little boy. Whether he came by those traits as the result of heredity or had absorbed them from Maggie, Eli didn't know. The one thing he did know, however, was that anyone who came within Maggie's sphere usually ended up the better for it. That even included him, a nearly faithless former Quaker and occasionally guileful newspaperman.

Eli admired his wife's strong faith, kind heart, and unabashed love for those whom society considered to be outsiders. When he first met Maggie in 1855 he had been impressed to learn that she treated Nate and Emily as friends, not employees. She also cared for the formerly indigent James O'Reilly and the failed novelist Chester Carson as if they were relatives, rather than boarders. Later she welcomed struggling young lawyer Edgar Lape and Patrick McCoy, an undertaker's assistant. It didn't surprise Eli one bit that Maggie never made much money from her boarders. She was compulsively kind. Yet somehow the Second Street Boarding House had managed to scrape by

Because she so readily welcomed those considered to be outcasts, and because of persistent rumors about their involvement in the Underground Railroad, the relationship between the Second Street Boarding House and the town was tense. When escaped slaves Matilda and Chloe Strong arrived in 1861 and stayed on at the house, the murmuring increased, as did the frowns and cold stares.

Given the situation, it should not have surprised Eli that in early 1863, while he was away reporting on the war an arsonist torched Maggie's boarding house and the outbuilding housing his *Gazette*. It should not have surprised him, but it did. Eli hadn't anticipated that a few young men would be so cruel and organized to burn the buildings.

But that was in the past. Now they were home again, after nearly a year-long sojourn in Pennsylvania. Blaineton had not been easy to live in, but at least it was home.

"May I hold the baby?" Abigail was asking.

Maggie proudly surrendered her daughter and watched her sister-in-law cuddle the infant.

Intrigued by the new family member, Tryphena Moore bent at the waist and studied Faith carefully. She did this for several solemn seconds then returned to her usual ramrod straight posture. "The child has her father's coloring but her mother's good looks," she said. "That, my friends, is a wise baby." Having made her pronouncement, she added, "Well, then! Let us go to the carriages. We've spent enough time standing on this dreary platform."