

Maggie & Eli's Big Fight

Maggie stared unblinkingly at him for a moment. She hadn't intended to do so, but suddenly blurted, "Why did you not tell me about Gettysburg?"

"I didn't want to worry you."

"Forgive me, but I fear that is not the truth."

"In truth, then, I don't know why I didn't tell you."

There was an edge to her voice as she said, "I think you do know, Eli. I think you were planning to have us move all along."

"Only after I learned about the fire, I promise you. Becky, Sally, and Andrew made the offer while Carson and I were staying at their farm. It's not as if this has been planned for months."

Maggie left his arms and crossed the room. "Regardless, Eli, I shan't move."

"Why on earth not?"

She turned. "Because you are asking me to leave my home. Because *I* own a perfectly good piece of property on which we may rebuild."

"Fine and well, Maggie, but we are in danger as long as we stay in Blaineton. It is my duty to protect you and all the others under our roof."

She sniffed. "First of all, we no longer have a roof. Secondly, you have a fine way of protecting us, Elijah Smith. You left us and put *your* life in danger on battlefields."

"That can't be helped. It's my job."

"It is *not* your job. You may write your stories from reports that come over the telegraph."

He sighed. "This is a big story, Maggie. I can't write it sitting in an office and depending on news from the wire."

"I don't want you to go back." There. She said it.

"And I want you out of Blaineton."

"Well, I shan't go."

His eyes snapped in annoyance. "On the contrary, Maggie, you *shall* go."

The tone he used was as close to an order as she had ever heard from him and it stunned her. "I beg your pardon?"

"I said *you shall move*."

The room vibrated with tension. Maggie sank into a terrible sense of betrayal. "Elijah! You said we would make this decision together."

Frustrated, he took a step toward her. "Listen to me, Margaret Smith. It is not safe here. You heard the sheriff. And since I am head of this household –"

"Head of this household? Elijah Amos Smith! I was under the impression that we were partners! I thought we reasoned together and decided together."

He took a deep breath as he sought to moderate his tone. "Under normal circumstances, yes, but there are times when that cannot be so, and this is one of those times. So understand me: I am the head of our household and it is my duty to make sure that everyone – including you – is safe. We are moving to Gettysburg and that is the end of it." He stiffened his back as he repeated what Samuel had said earlier to Abigail. "The end of it, understand? I will broach no further argument from you."

How dare he treat her as if she were somehow less than he? Where had her tender husband gone? What had happened to her understanding Eli? Maggie's eyes grew narrow. "Ah. So I see how it is now. Well, sir, there is a trundle bed in Bob and Natey's room and it would be well if you slept there." With that, she turned on her heel and swept out the door.

Eli thumped after her. "Do what you will, Mrs. Smith! You're still going to move!" And then her last sentence registered. "What? It would be well if I slept where?"

Maggie whirled around. "Anywhere but my bed, sir."

His mouth fell open. "Maggie!"

"You will listen to *me* now, Mr. Smith, and you will listen closely. You may be able to order me about, but if we are to play that game then there is one place where I still wield power." She straightened her shoulders to show him she meant business. "You have gotten what you wanted nearly every night since you returned. Sometimes twice a night. And, yes, I enjoyed it, too. You are a fine lover and I have missed being with you as much as you have missed being with me. But if you say that I must move, then I say that you must *contain*."

With that, she marched down the hall, leaving her husband with his mouth hanging open.