



TIMELESS

For  
*a*  
Lifetime

BOOK 3

GABRIELLE MEYER



TIMELESS • 3

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Lifetime

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To my daughters,  
Ellis and Maryn.  
You bring hope and grace  
into my life every day.  
I love you with all my heart.  
~ Mama

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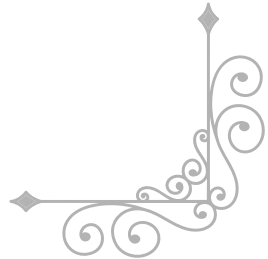
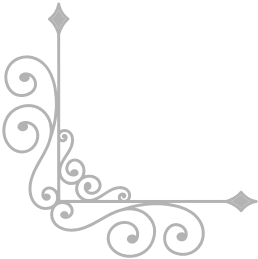


So teach us to number our days,  
that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

Psalm 90:12



PART  
**One**



# 1



## GRACE

**FEBRUARY 28, 1692**

**SALEM VILLAGE**

It was a strange reality to be on the precipice of tragedy and not be able to stop it. Stranger, still, to live two simultaneous lives and know that one day I would have to choose one and leave the other forever. But this had been my existence since birth. A gift, my mama had called it, though I am certain she only said that to placate the fears of a child.

A child born with the mark of a time-crosser.

As I kneaded sourdough in the kitchen of my father's tavern, my hands and wrists covered in flour, my mind slipped from the harsh conditions of Salem Village in 1692 to my colorful life in 1912. It was the only way to cope with the drudgeries of my work and the foreknowledge I had about the witch trials that would soon be upon us. Reverend Parris's daughter and niece had been ill for the past six weeks, and the whispers had

already started—soon the accusations would fly and the event I had dreaded for a lifetime would be at my doorstep.

Bringing with it the revelation of my own dark secret.

I glanced up as rain slashed against the leaded windowpanes in the small kitchen and pushed aside the blonde hair that escaped my white cap. It seemed that no amount of daydreaming could keep me safe from the life I was currently living.

Outside the tavern, a storm had been blowing for the past six days, bringing relentless wind, rain, and sleet. The real storm, though, was picking up strength in the clouded minds and hearts of Salem's inhabitants, who were always on the lookout for an attack—whether from the Abenaki Indians or from the spiritual realm, which was much more frightful and heinous to battle.

My twin sister, Hope, entered the low, timber-ceilinged kitchen at the back of Eaton Ordinary and snatched a dried fig from the worktable. The tavern was the only home we'd ever known in Salem Village. It was the center of the community, and our father, Uriah Eaton, the tavern's proprietor, was the most beloved man in the county. Generous to a fault—when it served him well. Ruthless and shrewd when it did not.

“Sarah Good is here begging again,” Hope said.

I shaped the loaf of dough and laid it into a bowl before setting a linen cloth over the top. Without a word, I wiped my hands on my apron and reached for a few sweet biscuits and baked potatoes, fresh out of the brick oven.

“You're not going to give her food, are you?” Hope frowned. “She'll keep coming back if you feed her.”

I sighed. “She has two small children to feed, and they're homeless. What else are we to do? Especially with weather like this?”

“You're far too kind for your own good, Grace. You know Father wouldn't like it.”

“Father isn't here.” I laid the items onto a square of linen and

tied it shut, pushing aside the guilt that propelled my generosity. If Hope only knew the secret that had been burning in my chest for the past few years, she would not call me kind.

I started to leave the kitchen, but Hope put her hand out to stop me. We were identical, though anyone who knew us well could tell us apart immediately. Hope was a little taller, a little slimmer, and more talkative. She had a beauty mark to the left of her full lips that I did not. But we both shared the same brown eyes, the same curly blonde hair tucked under our white caps, and the same delicate features.

“They’re whispering about her,” Hope said quietly so our indentured girl, Leah, did not hear from the hearth where she tended the fire.

“Everyone is always whispering about Goody Good,” I responded, trying to move past her.

Hope shook her head, and I could see the concern in her eyes. “Reverend Parris’s daughter and niece are worse—and now young Ann Putnam and Elizabeth Hubbard are showing signs of affliction. They claim that Sarah Good is one of the women who has bewitched them.”

I continued forward, but Hope took hold of my arm.

“Let us leave,” she pleaded. “You know we can change history and forfeit this path. 1912 is vibrant and promising—we could stay there forever and not have to return here.”

I stared at my sister, younger than me by fifteen minutes, apprehension tightening my mouth as I said, “’Tis dangerous to change history. Mama has warned against it our whole life—especially for selfish reasons. Something catastrophic might happen, and it would be our fault.”

“But we would not have to endure this godforsaken path any longer,” Hope insisted. “We could leave the hardship and the trouble behind us. You know it’s going to get worse.”

How many times had we fought about this issue?

Our mother in 1912, Maggie Cooper, was a time-crosser and

had passed the gift on to us. Hope and I had been born with Mama's mark on the backs of our heads that sent us between 1912 and 1692. When we went to sleep in 1692, we woke up in 1912, and when we fell asleep in 1912, we woke up in 1692 without any time passing while we were away. On our twenty-fifth birthday, October twelfth, we would choose which path to keep and which to forfeit forever.

We both knew we would not stay in 1692, but Hope had always wanted to leave early, and the only way to do that would be to knowingly change history in 1692. If we did, we would forfeit our lives here. Our physical bodies would die in 1692, and our conscious minds would stay in 1912.

But it was much too dangerous. It would be easier—and safer—to bide our time.

"We cannot change history," I whispered as I clutched the bundle of food. "It could set into motion events that are not supposed to happen. We could cause wars or famines—or worse. It's not worth it, Hope. Not when we only have seven and a half months left to endure."

She let out a weary, frustrated sigh. "Fine—but if anyone accuses me of witchcraft, you won't be able to stop me."

My heart fell at her words, opening the gaping darkness inside me.

I could never tell Hope that it would be *me* who accused her one day. I had foolishly allowed my curiosity to get the best of me four years ago in my other path. While studying the witch trials, I saw words that had haunted me ever since. *Hope Eaton, daughter of the ordinary keeper Uriah Eaton, was yet another casualty of the Salem Witch Trials when her sister, Grace Eaton, became her accuser.*

How could I ever call my sister a witch? It was unfathomable, but history did not lie.

Or did it?

I had slammed the book closed before I could learn more.

What had it meant by “yet another casualty”? I couldn’t bring myself to look, and I vowed I would never search for answers again.

“Don’t talk like that,” I whispered, trying to cover the anxiety in my voice. “You know what people already think about us.”

I stepped past Hope and walked through the connecting door into the main room of the tavern. It was past the noon hour, but there were several men and women sitting at tables with their pints of ale. The weather had made all outside work impossible, so people had come to the ordinary to visit, hear the latest gossip, and stay warm.

John Indian, Reverend Parris’s enslaved man, was tending the bar today for Father. He worked at the ordinary several days a week and kept an eye on things when Father was away. John glanced up at me and nodded toward the crackling hearth, where Sarah Good stood with her back to the room. Her worn and tattered dress had probably not been washed in a year. She carried her young son on her hip, while her four-year-old daughter, Dorothy, clutched her mother’s skirts. Neither of the children were properly clothed for the February weather.

I acknowledged John and moved toward Sarah and her children. Hope followed me out of the kitchen.

Several people in the room were watching Sarah, whispering to each other. Salem Village was a small agricultural community about five miles north of Salem Towne. With fewer than a thousand inhabitants, almost everyone knew everyone else’s business. Surely they all knew of the afflicted girls and the rumors swirling about bewitchment.

When Sarah saw me approach, she turned and snatched the bundle out of my hands, grumbling under her breath. “Is this all?”

Her unwashed body and sweat-stained clothing sent off a putrid smell. It was well known that her husband, William Good, had abandoned her. She and the children were left to the charity of neighbors, but they were cast out of one house after the other because of Sarah’s foul mood.

“’Tis all we can spare,” I told her. “Stay and warm yourself as long as you need.”

“All you can spare?” Sarah snorted. “You aren’t so high and mighty as you think, Grace Eaton. They may be whispering about me, but they’ve been whispering about you and your sister much longer.”

Hope took a protective step forward. “We’ve given you what we can—”

“You’ve given me nothing but leftovers,” Sarah spat.

The other patrons quieted, and John stepped out from behind the bar.

Sarah looked between Hope and me. “’Tis the likes of you who should be begging. With those strange marks of yours and the mysteries surrounding your birth. The only reason no one questions you is because your father owns the ordinary.” She took a step closer while Dorothy tripped along. “Do you ever wonder about your mother? Why no one knows her name or where she came from?”

Hope drew closer to me, and I inhaled, lifting my chin.

“You should leave,” I said. “We’ve given you what we can.”

Sarah snarled at me and then turned and left the ordinary, Dorothy trailing behind her.

The other patrons remained quiet as they stared at Hope and me.

What Sarah said was true. People did whisper about our marks and the mysteries surrounding our birth mother in this path—yet Father forbade anyone to speak of her.

Hope turned her back to the others and met my troubled gaze. “Don’t mind Sarah. No one listens to her, anyway.”

John returned to his place behind the bar, and the others slowly returned to their drinks and gossip.

The front door blew open, and Father appeared in a black cloak.

“Gather some food and firewood,” he said to Hope and me.

“We’ve been summoned to the parsonage. Reverend Parris’s girls have worsened. Something must be done.”



The storm had intensified. Hope and I bundled up in our thickest coats, mittens, scarves, and caps to walk the quarter mile from the tavern to the Parrises’ home. Our properties abutted one another, but trees stood between them, so we took the road to Andover, trying to avoid puddles even though it was useless. Sleet pelted my face, so I kept my head down.

The hem of my blue gown was caked with mud, and my shoes were sodden with cold rainwater. I toted a basket of food for the Parris family while Hope carried a bundle of firewood. We followed Father like dutiful daughters, though Hope was mumbling under her breath.

She would much rather be in 1912. We both would. But God had chosen this path for us, as well, and we had work to do here.

Soon we turned off the road and onto a drive that led up to the parsonage. We were met by the family’s dog, who was soaking wet. He wagged his tail in greeting and followed us up the path.

The brown house was tall and narrow, with two rooms on the main floor and two above. A central chimney allowed for a fireplace in each room. The church had built the house many years ago, and it had been the home of several parish ministers. The Parris family had moved in three years ago, but from the start, Samuel Parris had been a source of division for the village. He preached strict adherence to Puritan laws with little to no mercy, but many of the congregants were supporters of the Half-Way Covenant, a partial church membership that allowed more freedom of thought and behavior. Because of this, half the town disapproved of him and refused to pay his wage or supply him with firewood. The winter had been long and cold for the family.

Father rapped loudly upon the front door, and it was opened immediately by Tituba, the Parrises' enslaved woman and John Indian's wife. She lowered her gaze and opened the door further to allow us to enter.

"Mister Eaton," Reverend Parris said as he stood from his chair near the hearth. "Welcome."

Three other men were in the cold room, their dour faces filled with concern. Two of them were Putnams, the wealthiest and most powerful men in the village. The other was a deacon of the church, like Father.

"Take the supplies to the kitchen," Father instructed us. "And be useful."

Tituba closed the door behind us, and we followed her through the main room to the kitchen lean-to in the back. There, Mistress Parris sat at a table, looking through the window at the bleak world outside.

Though there was a fire in the hearth, each of the rooms was chilly and shadowed. An eerie, foreboding feeling penetrated the dark walls and made the air feel thick.

Where were the girls?

"Good day, Mistress Parris," I said. "We've brought food and wood."

She looked up at us and blinked several times as if pulling herself from a daze. Deep worry lines and circles under her eyes betrayed her exhaustion.

"Bless you," she said as she rose. "Just when I think we shall run out of food and wood, God doth provide more."

Tituba went to the hearth, where she removed bread from the brick oven. Mistress Parris glanced at her with a look of such distrust, I felt a shiver run up my spine.

I set my basket on the table, and Hope placed the firewood near the door. She startled at the sound of a knock.

"Who hath come in this violent weather?" Mistress Parris asked. "Not another man to gape at my poor child, I pray."

Tituba opened the door, and a man stood outside. His wide-brimmed hat was pulled low on his forehead, but I immediately recognized him.

“’Tis Isaac Abbott,” I said with a smile, instantly feeling better.

He looked up and met my smile, just as surprised and pleased to see me. His kind blue eyes immediately took in the room, and he nodded at Hope. She nodded back, though she didn’t seem nearly as happy to see our old friend.

“Goodman Abbott,” Mistress Parris said, seeming relieved herself. “What brings you to our home today?”

He stepped into the small kitchen and took off his hat, closing the door behind him. “I’ve come with a load of firewood. ’Tis not much, but it should get you through the week.”

“Bless you,” the older woman said with tears in her eyes.

“Mistress Parris?” came the stern voice of Reverend Parris. “Bring Tituba and the girls to us.”

She briefly closed her eyes, as if saying a prayer, and then nodded at Tituba to follow her.

They left the kitchen, and I moved closer to Isaac. He had been tall and broad since his teenage years but had grown stronger since taking over his family’s farm. His steady presence was comforting, though I wasn’t sure what he could do to ease my concerns.

“Are the rumors true?” he asked me, speaking in low tones.

“I know not,” I replied. “I haven’t seen the girls myself.”

Isaac glanced in Hope’s direction, and I could see the longing in his handsome gaze. He clutched his hat and said, “You look well today, Hope.”

She busied herself stacking the firewood. “Thank you, Isaac,” she muttered, though she didn’t bother to look at him.

He’d been in love with my dazzling sister since he was thirteen, but she had never given him reason to speak of his feelings. On the contrary, she had tried to discourage him for years.

And for good reason. We didn't intend to stay in 1692 and had turned down anyone who tried to pursue us. It wasn't hard, since women outnumbered men in the community because of the casualties of King William's War and the influx of female refugees from Maine.

But even if we had planned to stay, I doubted Hope would have been interested. Isaac was steadfast, kind, and dependable.

In other words, *boring* in Hope's estimation.

To me, Isaac was the very best friend I'd ever had outside of my sister. If we were to stay in Salem Village, I could easily love him. Though he had never seen me in that light, since I lived in Hope's shadow—both here and in 1912.

A commotion in the main room made me jump. Wails and screaming rent the air as something hit the wall.

Hope looked up at me, her usually fearless gaze full of trepidation.

"I will unload the firewood," Isaac said, then quickly left the kitchen, allowing a burst of cold air to enter the house.

The door leading into the main room was cracked open, so I approached to see the girls for myself.

"Come," Father said when he saw me. "See what witchcraft hath brought upon this home."

I opened the door farther and stared at the scene before me.

Nine-year-old Betty Parris lay writhing on the floor, her body contorting in inhuman ways. Her twelve-year-old cousin, Abigail, sat in a chair, alternately crying out in pain and swatting at the air as if someone were attacking her.

"They have grown worse," Reverend Parris said in a severe voice. "Five nights past, Tituba made rye bread with their urine and fed it to the dog. Her white magic has increased the girls' sufferings."

The girls' wails grew louder, and Abigail threw herself to the ground like her cousin, Betty. They both began to writhe and jerk upon the floor.