

# PRAISE FOR *THE PATRIOT BRIDE*

“*The Patriot Bride* is an amazing adventure of patriotism, adventure, and romance. Kimberley Woodhouse has long been one of my favorite authors, and this story did not disappoint. With her attention to detail and historical accuracy, Kim weaves a tale that is sure to keep the reader turning the pages. I think my readers will truly enjoy this story.”

—Tracie Peterson,  
bestselling author of the Heart of the Frontier series

“Kimberley Woodhouse is a master at historical romance, and it’s nearly impossible to find her equal. I highly recommend *The Patriot Bride* for an instant immersion into a beautiful romance laced with authentic details around our country’s beginnings.”

—Colleen Coble, *USA Today* bestselling author of  
*The View from Rainshadow Bay* and the Rock Harbor series

“*The Patriot Bride* is my favorite kind of historical fiction and Woodhouse executes it so well. She plays out great moments in history by setting fictional characters right next to true historical figures. I loved reading this. I wish schools taught history in such a fun way.”

—Mary Connealy, bestselling author of *The Accidental Guardian*

“In the latest installment of the wildly popular Daughters of the Mayflower series, bestselling author Kimberley Woodhouse takes the reader on a breathtaking journey woven around the historical facts of the American Revolution. Fans of historical romance are going to love this action-packed tale!”

—Kathleen Y’Barbo, bestselling author of *The Pirate Bride* and  
*My Heart Belongs in Galveston, Texas*

“*The Patriot Bride* is a tale as spirited and full of conviction as the era it represents. At a time of revolution, the twin virtues of duty and love compete and compel. Readers are sure to cheer on endearing characters until the very last page.”

—Jocelyn Green, award-winning author of *A Refuge Assured*

“Woodhouse’s love for this time period and these characters shines through on every page. If you enjoyed *The Mayflower Bride*, you’re going to love *The Patriot Bride*.”

—Becca Whitham, award-winning co-author of *The Promise Bride*

“A must read for anyone who appreciates historical fiction and the sacrifices made to establish this great country. *The Patriot Bride* is populated with unexpected twists and turns amidst a familiar story of our nation’s founding. Readers will see sides of George Washington and Benjamin Franklin not taught in school. Kimberley Woodhouse blends fact with fiction in such a way historical fiction fans will be hooked and inspired to give air baths a try.”

—Darcie J. Gudger, author of *Spin, Toss, and Catch*

*The*  
*Patriot*  
*Bride*



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*Our mission is to inspire the world with the life-changing message of the Bible.*



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# DEDICATION

This book is lovingly dedicated to my  
outrageously incredible-one-and-only-son: Josh.

Who somehow along the way earned the nickname of George.

You've been a delight to me since before you were  
born (even though you broke one of my ribs).

And I've loved you more and more each day.

As a baby you were cuddly, smiley, and really quite chunky. (I'm sure you're loving me for writing that in this dedication. I *should* include a picture. . . .) You never met a stranger and could cheer up and encourage everyone you encountered. You entertained us and made us laugh and gave the very best hugs. Your creative genius still amazes me and it *almost* makes up for all the Legos I stepped on in your room over the years.

It's hard to believe that you are grown and married—(gasp! How did I get that old? And how did you survive with a mom who homeschooled you and tortured you with math drills and diagramming sentences? And let's not forget all the book tours? Especially once you were old enough to handle all the hookups on the RV. . .

I won't go into details, I promise)—but I've treasured watching you grow and mature into the amazing man that you are today.

I'm sure I've embarrassed you plenty over the years,  
but it was all worth it, right?

You are incredible, and I couldn't be prouder.

You amaze me every day.

I could never tell you how much you mean to me  
and what a thrill it is to be your mom. Oh, and one more  
thing. . . just remember that I love you more.

Dear Reader,

How exciting to be back with the Daughters of the Mayflower series. I hope you have enjoyed *The Mayflower Bride*, *The Pirate Bride*, and *The Captured Bride*. As the fourth book in this series, *The Patriot Bride* follows the descendants of the Lyttons and brings us to a fascinating part of our history: the Revolutionary War. Make sure you watch for *The Liberty Bride* and *The Cumberland Bride* also being published this year.

In documenting the great events of our country's history in this series, it is important for me to remind you that this is a work of fiction. While I strive to be as historically accurate as possible, in many places I had to take artistic license.

For instance, George Washington; Benjamin Franklin; and his son, William, are integral pieces of American history and are also key characters in *The Patriot Bride*. But please note that even though I did extensive research, there's only so much I could ascertain about personalities and other details. So good ol' George and Ben are depicted in the way my imagination created them for this story. I created their dialogue and traits, although I based my interpretations on information gleaned from numerous biographies. The part they play in Matthew's life in this story is not based on any fact; it is purely fictitious. The part that George plays in Faith's life is also a creation of my mind. As is Benjamin Franklin's role in the story. It is not my wish to take anything away from these brilliant men who were founding fathers of our country. Any mistakes are also purely my own. Please see the Note from the Author at the back of the book about other details and a timeline discrepancy with Benjamin Franklin as well.

Might I suggest some wonderful nonfiction books to read if you wish to truly know these great men? *His Excellency George Washington* by Joseph J. Ellis is an excellent biography of our first president. *Washington: A Life* by Ron Chernow is also a brilliant read (even though the tome is tiny print and more than eight hundred pages long). *George Washington: A Collection* compiled and edited by W. B. Allen is a fabulous compilation of the writings of this amazing man. *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* is also an incredible read and one of my preferred choices. It is definitely a classic. One of my favorite parts is seeing how he scheduled his day. Lots to learn from both of these fascinating and honorable men.

Charles Thomson was the secretary of the Continental Congress and also one of the Sons of Liberty, along with Paul Revere, Alexander Hamilton, Samuel Adams, John Hancock, and even Benedict Arnold, along with many others. Their depiction in this story corresponds with events that actually occurred in history, but all the details are created for the purpose of this story.

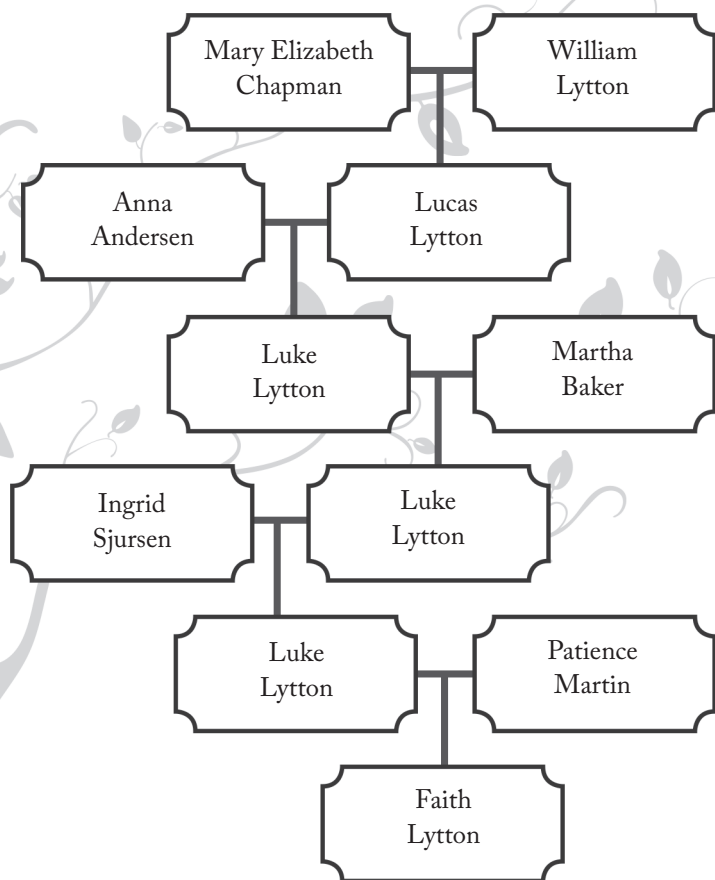
For your ease of reading, I've written the majority of the manuscript in modern English with just a few hints here and there of colonial expressions to help create a sense of the time period. This was to aid the flow of the story and make it understandable for the modern reader.

For more details on the actual events of the American Revolution and the people who truly lived during this time, I've given sources, websites, and links in the Note from the Author at the back of the book.

Enjoy the journey,  
Kimberley

# Daughters of the Mayflower

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## The Lytton Family

William Lytton married Mary Elizabeth Chapman (Plymouth 1621)

Parents of 13 children, one who was Lucas

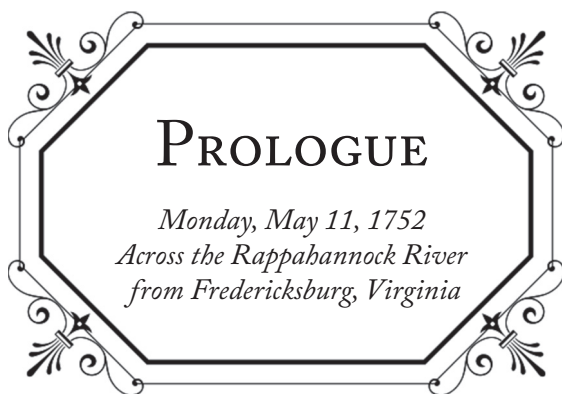
Lucas Lytton (born 1625) married Anna Andersen (Massachusetts 1649)

Luke Lytton (born 1652) married Martha Baker (Massachusetts 1675)

Luke Lytton (born 1677) married Ingrid Sjursen (Massachusetts 1699)

Luke Lytton (born 1700) married Patience Martin (Virginia 1730)

Only child was Faith Lytton



Ten-year-old Faith Lytton placed her hands on her hips—like Mama did when she was exasperated—and looked at the sad little group of puny troops allotted to her. Why must the bigger and mostly older boys always insist that their teams be so mismatched? A huff left her lips.

“What’re we gonna do, Faith?” Tommy kicked the dirt. “They win every time.”

Several of the other boys whined their discontent. It wasn’t that she didn’t like her team. In fact, come rain or come shine, they had been the same team for almost forever. It’s just they were all. . . well. . . *small*.

Taunts echoed across the field from their opponents, the League of Victorious Virginians—a ridiculous name for ridiculous boys. Obsessed with playing war and pretending to be soldiers, the league wanted nothing more than to *win*, so much so they fought their skirmishes against younger, smaller opponents.

Faith narrowed her eyes. The only girl under sixteen years of age within ten miles amidst uncountable boys, she had learned to hold her own with the lads a long time ago. Now, she found herself a leader. Even if it was of the scrawny crowd.

How could she teach the other team a lesson? They weren’t

*all* older, nor were they smarter. Just because they were bigger and stronger shouldn't mean that they should get their way every time. It was almost like they just wanted to tromp all over the smaller, skinnier, and more studious kids.

Of which she found herself a part.

Another huff, but this time bigger. If only the other team could feel her aggravation all the way across the field. She was tired of getting tromped. Plain ol' tired of it. She wanted to win.

"Faith?" Charlie poked her in the shoulder. "Come on, we gotta come up with something."

"I'm thinking." She glared at the boy she outweighed by probably twenty pounds, even though he was five months older and she was thin as a rail, as Mama would say. Scrawny indeed.

"Well, don't take all day. My ma won't let me eat supper if I show up late again."

Faith glanced around at the other nine members of her team. Skinny, short, a bunch of boys who'd rather stay at home and work their sums than play war every day. Then she took a long look at the others. Taller and stronger. There really wasn't a contest. But. . . She tapped a finger against her chin. They weren't that bright. In fact, there wasn't a truly intelligent one in the bunch. Mama would scold her for such thoughts, but Mr. Brickham—her tutor—would laugh because it was true and he loved what he called "Faith's inquisitive intelligence." The thought made her smile.

Her team had been going about this the wrong way for too long.

The only way to win would be to outsmart them. And while the bigger boys might have the brawn, her team definitely had the brains.

She turned toward the pond. An idea struck her in an instant which caused her smile to grow. Trying not to giggle with

glee—because soldiers didn’t giggle—she gathered the rest of her group into a tight circle and whispered her plan.

Several of her team looked to the pond and shrugged, while the others appeared concerned. . . or was it confused? It really wasn’t that difficult.

Tommy crossed his arms over his chest. “I don’t know, Faith. That sounds awfully risky.” He crinkled up his nose.

“It’ll work. Trust me.” The grin that split her face couldn’t be contained. Wait until she wrote George about it. He’d be impressed with her plan, she just knew it. The letter she’d received from him yesterday was sitting on her dresser waiting to be answered, and boy, wouldn’t it be grand to write her friend about a victory?

As her team walked to the center of the field, she thought about what she would write. George Washington was more than just a friend—he was her best friend. Add to that, he was her family’s closest neighbor. Since Faith was an only child, she’d followed George around all her growing-up years. Wherever he went around their two farms, she’d traipse along behind him. She looked up to the boy as an older brother. And when he’d left to go learn more about surveying for Lord Fairfax, she’d cried. That day had broken Faith’s heart, because George was her pal. But he’d promised to write her letters and visit as often as he could.

While penmanship had been her least favorite to study, she’d put great effort into learning how to correspond with him. From the time she was five years old until this day, she’d been determined to pen her own letters to George. Much to her mother’s consternation.

Not because Mama didn’t want her writing letters or learning penmanship, but because she had given Mama fits over what she wanted to learn and *when* she wanted to learn it. On more than one occasion, Mama—whose Christian name was Patience—had proclaimed that the good Lord above had a sense of humor since she

had to practice the virtue from sun up to sun down with Faith. That was probably half the reason Papa hired Mr. Brickham so early for her. Oh, he might have told her it was because she was so smart and they wanted her to have the very best education they could provide, but she knew better.

Because she wanted to impress George—and didn't want to exasperate Mama—she worked harder and soon wrote flowing letters to her pal. They were quite grown-up too. George often said so.

She'd always wanted to be grown-up like him—he was ten years her elder—but George told her there was no rush to take on the responsibilities of an adult. And he should know, having lost his father when he was only eleven.

He constantly reminded her there were plenty of children her own age.

Plenty of children, yes, but there was one problem. They were all *boys*. So George taught her to use her smarts and keep up with them.

Well, wouldn't George be proud now?

The two teams came together in the center of the field. Robert—the leader of the league—gave her a smirk and shook his head as he looked down at her. “Which side of the pond do you want? Since there's no chance of ya winning, we'll let you choose this time.”

Faith put on her best frown and crossed her arms over her middle. War was serious business. Even if it was just a game. Time for them to take her seriously. “We'll take the west side.”

Several moans came from the boys behind her. Never mind them. She knew her plan would work.

Robert laughed. “Sure, Faith. You can have whatever you want.” He gestured to two of his team. “Post the flags.” He turned back to her. “Same rules as always. No one can leave their side until the

horn blows. If you are captured by another team member, you're out. Whichever team captures the other's flag first, wins. Agreed?" He stuck out his hand.

Faith grabbed it and shook.

"You've got thirty minutes to get to your flag, plan your attack, and then John will blow the horn for the battle to begin." Robert snickered then turned back to his team.

With a wave of her hand, Faith motioned for her team to follow, and she ran for the reeds on the west side of the pond. The pond was always the chosen battleground because to capture the opponent's flag, you had to venture through woods and dense undergrowth while trying to avoid the enemy. The league was good at hiding people along the route so that she normally lost a good portion of her team before they even reached the half-way point. This time would be different. The other team wouldn't expect them to do anything out of the ordinary.

As her little band crouched in the reeds in front of their flag, she kept looking to the woods. "Ya know, they're going to set up just like they always do because they *always* win with that strategy. They will hide enough of their team to try and capture us along the way in the woods, but we won't be there. Let them think we don't have any other plan. So just stay here. We'll pretend we are coming up with a plan—which we already have—while they think it will be like every other time, and then when we start, they will get into position. The two they'll send to advance on our flag will wait to scare us, but since we're not going to take that route, we should have about twenty minutes to make it to the other side."

Charlie chuckled. "I can't wait to see their faces when we surround their flag." He lowered his brow. "Hey, why didn't ya come up with this plan sooner?"

“Do I have to do all the thinking around here?” Faith pushed his shoulder.

“No. But I just wish you woulda—’cause we’re gonna win!”

The rest of the group caught on to the excitement, and Faith enjoyed listening to the boys chatter about what they wanted to chant for their victory. While the entire team was educated at home and quite studious, Faith’s private tutor taught her more than just arithmetic and reading. Mr. Brickham had a passion for history, and since Faith had a leaning toward tomboyish ways, she often coerced him into teaching her about famous battles. Mr. Brickham told her it was fine with her parents unless she began to get behind in other studies.

While the strategy she’d devised was only for a game, she knew her teacher would be proud.

A shuffle in the reeds next to them made her hush the group. The horn hadn’t sounded yet, so which one of the other team was trying to sneak in and cheat?

She held her breath while her teammates appeared to do the same. Eyes glued to the shifting reeds on the right.

A familiar face split the stalks. “George!” Faith’s relief made her put a hand to her chest. “What are you doing here?”

Several of the boys moved closer. George was quite a fascination for them, being named the surveyor of Culpepper County at a mere seventeen years of age. All the boys wanted to be like him.

“I came home to visit Mother and wanted to stop in and see how you were first.” Her lifelong friend sat in the reeds, glanced around, and dipped his head low, which was quite a feat. He was really tall. “And it seems you are doing very well. Is this one of the battles you have told me about in your letters?”

“Yes.” She couldn’t help but smile up at him as she thrilled in her team’s admiration for her friend. Lifting her shoulders back,

she hoped George saw her as a leader and not just a child, but her emotions won over and she threw her arms around his neck. He was here! And he would be able to watch her team finally win. Joy bubbled up inside her.

But it was time to be serious. She had a battle to win.

Faith pulled back and stuck a finger in his face, trying to stand as tall as she could and look as authoritative as possible. Even standing she barely topped a couple inches above his seated frame. “But I need you to stay hidden. We haven’t begun, and I have a plan to beat the league once and for all.” Nodding, Faith wiped her hands on her dress. This was more important than ever—George was here to witness it.

“What?” He put a hand to his chest. “I came to offer my assistance, Captain Lytton.” He gave her a wink. “You do not want my help?”

“Oh, couldn’t he?” Tommy pleaded. “We could win for sure!”

Charlie shook his head at the same moment Faith did. “Any other time, we’d love for you to be on our team, but you’re too big.”

“And”—Faith piped up—“we need to win on our own. They’d never admit to us winning if we allow you to help.”

George looked a bit amused. He crossed his arms and sat hunkered in the reeds.

Faith placed a hand over his. “I can do this.”

He cocked an eyebrow. “I have no doubt. So when does it begin?”

The horn sounded across the pond.

“Now.” Faith left George and crawled to the edge of the pond, waving for the others to follow. Not even looking back to see if everyone was with her, she climbed into the small skiff. Each *thunk* behind her told her another teammate had climbed in as she kept an eye on the sides. So far so good. They didn’t seem to weigh it down too much. Give another point to the scrawny team. Taking

one more glance to the rear, she looked at Charlie. He nodded from the back. They were all in and crouched down. Faith and Charlie each had a paddle and started rowing as quietly as they could toward a small island covered with trees in the middle of the pond. The scent of algae and grass filled her nose. Her nose twitched. Holding in a sneeze to keep from giving away her team's position, Faith scrunched up her nose and shook her head.

A few minutes later, her face cracked into a smile as they reached the island. All was quiet. So far, the other team hadn't noticed the new strategy. The league had no idea what they were doing. Faith held a finger over her lips as her team snuck out of the boat. They kept quiet as they picked up the skiff and carried it through the trees.

At the breach in the trees on the other side, Faith hurried them forward. "We are almost there." She kept her voice as low as possible. "From this point on, it's run across the beach and then row as fast as we can."

Anticipation glowed on the boys' faces. The win was within their grasp, and they all knew it. It took more than a half hour to run around the pond, and that was without hindrances of watching for the enemy. It had been maybe ten minutes, and they were over halfway there—and their opponents were still unaware of their strategy.

Running for all she was worth, Faith dragged the band of small boys along with the boat to the shore. Once they were back in the water, her energy surged, and she paddled with every ounce of strength she had.

A yell echoed across the water. "Where did they go?"

A few more yells answered back. No one from the league knew where her team was. Not even risking a glance behind, Faith paddled the last few strokes. They reached the opposite shore and

tumbled out on top of each other. She grinned. The other team's flag stood in front of them not more than twenty feet. Could George see them? Wouldn't he be proud?

"Come on!" Faith ran toward the flag and didn't care if anyone heard her. "Let's capture it together! All of us!"

Robert ran from the north side of the woods and his jaw dropped. He waved his arms, screaming at his team to come out from hiding.

When her team reached the flag, Faith yelled for all she was worth. "We won! We captured the league's flag!"

Robert kicked at the dirt then started throwing rocks which splashed in great *kerplunks* in the pond. Apparently he was the one who should have been guarding their flag.

It wasn't hard to determine that he wasn't happy about losing. After several moments of his fit, several other boys raced to his side and the calamity only grew. Until they spotted George across the pond, walking toward the field.

Faith knew the exact moment they spotted him because they all straightened up and stopped acting like two-year-olds.

Robert pulled the horn from inside his shirt and blew three short bursts calling everyone back.

Faith grabbed the flag and marched to the field area where the two teams had met before they began. Her team chanted about their victory while she carried the flag, and her chest swelled with pride. She'd done it. Well, *they'd* done it. But it had been *her* idea, and it worked.

It took a long time for everyone to reach the field. Several of the league boys were covered in mud and leaves—obviously from the places they'd been hiding to ambush Faith's team—and none looked too happy.

George strode toward the group and immediately the bigger

boys from the league approached him with their cries of cheating. He shook his head and smiled. “They did not cheat. I watched the whole thing. It was a brilliant and well-executed plan.”

Robert began to argue again. But George held up a hand and stopped him. “Every time you play—win or lose—you learn a little more. Faith’s strategy was a good one, and it will challenge all of you to come up with different strategies next time.” He laid a hand on Robert’s shoulder and winked. “It helps to have a sneaky girl and smaller teammates sometimes—everyone can have value on a team. Not just the strong ones.”

Faith beamed under George’s praise. Not only had her team beat the undefeated League of Victorious Virginians—a name she would demand they change considering today’s loss—but her dear friend had helped to teach those big boys a lesson. And they *always* listened to George.

Maybe next time they would suggest dividing the teams up evenly. But as Faith gazed around at her group, she wasn’t sure she’d want a different troop of soldiers. Her team—scrawny as they were—lifted her up on their shoulders, and she waved the opponent’s flag. Smiling at George, she yelled quite dramatically, “Victory or death!”

Her older friend laughed. “Let us hope it never comes to that, young Faith. . . er, excuse me, Captain Lytton.” He bowed low.

Movement behind George’s bent frame caused Faith to jump down from the boys’ shoulders. Morton—her father’s valet—ran toward them looking quite grim.

Morton never ran.

Her heart drummed and sank. Dread drowned out her joy of victory. Then she saw it. Smoke.

Rising in the distance above her home.



George stood by the fireplace in his mother's parlor and listened to Morton and the Lyttons' solicitor. A man George knew all too well because Mr. Crenshaw had also been his father's solicitor. Over the years, the gentleman had steered George in understanding his own inheritance. Small as it was, if not for Lawrence—his older brother—and Crenshaw, George would have been lost. His father's death at such a young age had dealt a huge blow to him. How would Faith deal with double the loss? How could he help her?

But he had to. He stood straighter under the new weight he carried.

She was now his ward.

At age twenty, George began to feel the full scope of what lay before him. Faith had always been like a puppy following him around. She was like another little sister to him. She adored him. And he had always enjoyed the little sprite's company.

But now he was responsible for her well-being. For managing her estate until she was old enough to inherit.

He turned his attention back to Crenshaw.

Luke and Patience Lytton had been killed in a blaze that took out half the manor in minutes. The Lyttons had property, slaves, servants, and a vast amount of wealth. Faith was their only child.

Before he died, George's father—Augustine, otherwise known as Gus—had been best friends with Luke. Apparently, Luke had asked Gus to take care of his family in case anything happened to him. And in case of the loss of both Mr. and Mrs. Lytton, Gus Washington would become Faith's guardian until she turned twenty-one and inherited her family's fortune.

The mantle had passed to George when his father died. Lawrence was too far away at Mount Vernon to handle anything here.

Luke Lytton had never wanted his will changed, telling Crenshaw that if anyone would look out for Faith and her best interests, it would be George.

But Luke couldn't have thought he'd leave this life so soon. Faith was but the tender age of ten. George a mere twenty.

He looked out the window. Not only would the Lytton manor need to be restored, but the staff would all need taking care of, the estate would need to thrive so it would provide stable income for Faith's future. And then there was the question of where she would live. The life of a surveyor was not a decent life for a young girl, and it would hardly be appropriate for him to drag her along on his journeys. She certainly couldn't stay with his mother. Mary Ball Washington would neither understand nor abide Faith's precocious nature—one of his favorite things about his young friend. He'd hate to see it squashed.

His heart ached to think of her dealing with the loss of both parents. Faith was strong, but their family had been very close. Much closer than George had ever felt with his.

A knock at the door brought his attention back to the room. Mary—Mrs. Lytton's maid—came toward George. "I am sorry to bother you, sir"—she bowed—"but young Faith wants no one but you. She has done nothing but cry, and we cannot convince her to eat or sleep."

George straightened and nodded. "Let me accompany you back to the house and see what I can do." He turned to the solicitor. "Is there anything else that needs my attention at the moment?"

"No." He gathered his things. "I will bring the papers to you in the morning."

"Thank you." George bowed and then kissed his mother's cheek before heading out the door. As he walked the short distance between the two farms, a new idea formed. Maybe a change

of scenery would be good for Faith. The Martins in Boston didn't have any children and George trusted them with his life. Would they take Faith in for the rest of her upbringing? If they'd be willing, she could have the finest of schooling and tutors and would be surrounded by the best society had to offer. He'd have to get a letter off immediately.

But if he moved Faith to Boston, it would be difficult for him to visit as often. Unless he chose a different line of work. An option that held some appeal.

Stepping into the Lyttons' parlor, his eyes watered. Smoke still hung in the air. Faith couldn't stay here. Neither should the servants. On the settee, Faith was curled up into a ball, her dress still covered in dirt from her jaunty game of war, and her arms wrapped around her mother's shawl. With swollen green eyes, she looked up at him. Tears streamed down her face in silent rivers of pain.

George understood the heartache etched into her features all too well. He reached for her hand. "Let us go for a walk, shall we?"

She nodded and took his hand but kept the shawl tucked under her other arm.

They headed toward the apple orchard. One of her favorite places.

Silence stretched between them for a good while as he led her to a little hill and settled down on the grass. The air was sweet and fresh. Faith sat beside him and rested her head on his arm.

Unsure of where to begin or how to reach her broken heart, George thought it best to be honest. "I lost my father when I was about your age."

She nodded against his arm.

"It devastated me, and I felt lost for a long time. But the good Lord above saw me through."

Faith began to sob.

“It is not within my power to bring them back or take away the pain, dear girl. But I can promise that I will do my best to take care of you and make certain that all is well for your future.”

“I do not want to stay here right now. It scares me. Can I go with you?”

Exactly the question he’d expected from her. He sighed. “I don’t think so, but I have an idea. It may take me a bit to arrange everything. But I will make sure you are happy and well.”

“You will send me away?” She sounded resigned. Her tone so matter of fact, even though he noticed the quiver of her lower lip.

“It will not be like that, little Faith. I have trusted friends in Boston. If they are in agreement with my plan, I think it will be the perfect place for you to be for a while.”

She nodded. “I do not like the thought of being so far away, but I do not want to be here right now. Maybe not ever.” A small sigh made her shudder. “Will you come visit?”

“Yes.”

“And write letters? Like before?”

“Yes. I will even write more often.”

She tucked her hand back into his. “It hurts really bad, George.”

“I know.” He squeezed her hand. “But the ache will ease a bit over time. And you will always have your wonderful memories. Your parents were the finest people I’ve ever known.”

Sniffing, she sat up. “I want them back.” Her voice cracked.

It was hard to imagine that mere hours ago, he’d watched Faith be carried on her team’s shoulders in victory. Independent and strong-willed, the young girl had cried, “Victory or death!”

The contrast now was chilling. She seemed smaller and fragile, as if she could shatter into a million pieces at any moment.

Loss could do that. But could that fiery, fearless leader come back from such a blow? He hated to see her defeated and worn.

He'd have to do everything he could to help Faith survive and become vibrant once again.

Maybe they both needed to leave Virginia for a while.

Boston sounded better the more he thought about it.

"George?"

"Yes?"

"I'm an orphan now, aren't I."

His heart felt like it stopped for a breath as he looked into Faith's sad eyes. What could he possibly say to her to help ease the pain? "No." The sigh that left his lips felt heavy. "You are a child of our heavenly Father, so you are never truly an orphan. And don't forget. . .you have me." He tapped her nose like he used to when she was just a toddler following him around. "You will always have me while I'm here on this earth."

"I completely trust *you*, George." She took in a shaky breath and wiped tears from her cheeks. "But I do not like that God took my parents from me."

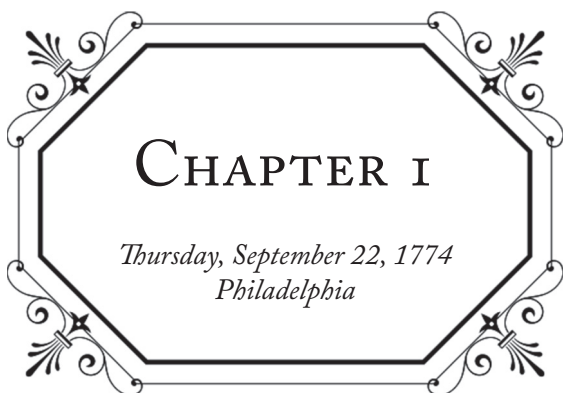
The hurt and anger in her voice surprised him, but he knew it would stay with her for a while. It was part of grieving someone you loved. But George sat up a little straighter. Part of being Faith's guardian meant steering her in the truth. "I do not believe that God *took* your parents from you, Faith. And He's far more trustworthy than I am. But I will do my best to be His representative here—to show you how good He is."

"I feel very alone."

He wrapped an arm around her shoulders. "You are never alone, my friend."

"But what about when you leave?"

"God will be with you. I promise."



# CHAPTER I

*Thursday, September 22, 1774*  
*Philadelphia*

Matthew Weber sat hidden in the corner of Charles Thomson's study and waited for word from him. Charles was not only a good friend but the secretary of the Continental Congress as well. His appointment as secretary had been fortuitous for them all. The plan had been to meet after the Congress so they could discuss what needed to be done next. A tap sounded on the door, and Matthew ducked deeper into the dark shadows. His heart pounded.

It wasn't the planned signal.

Who would be coming to the secretary's home tonight?

Matthew couldn't let anyone loyal to the King know he was here. And no one knew for sure when they might run into a Loyalist. It made things exceedingly difficult as the weeks passed.

A familiar face entered. A broad grin stretched across his face, Benjamin Franklin shut the door. "Matthew, I presume that is *you* hidden over there?"

Relief rushed through his veins. Shaking his head and letting his breath out in a great *whoosh*, Matthew laughed and stepped into the light. "Yes, 'tis me, Ben. But you did not use the appropriate signal, and by the way, wouldn't that have been a tad risky—mentioning my name—when you were not sure 'twas me?"

“If I had not been *sure*, yes.” The older man shook a finger at him. His gray eyes twinkling. “But Simpson acknowledged you were already here. And frankly, I wanted to see how you would handle the situation. Good show, had I not known you were here, I wouldn’t have seen you.”

“Ah, I see.” Matthew moved forward to shake Franklin’s hand still working to get his heart back to normal. “These days, we can be none too careful.” The definite need to practice at hiding and controlling his anxiousness pressed into his mind. The job before him grew more stressful by the day.

“I agree.” The older gentleman nodded several times and placed his hands behind his back as he paced the room. “ ’Tis hard to believe how things have changed over the years.”

“Yes, indeed.”

“How’s Deborah?” Matthew hadn’t seen Ben’s wife in a while. Ben smiled. “As lovely as ever.”

“Please give her my regards. Have you spoken to William?” Matthew kept his tone low.

“No.” The instant frown and gravity of the single word gave Matthew more than enough to understand the man’s disappointment. William and Benjamin Franklin had been on different sides of the political spectrum for some time.

Matthew turned back to look at the bookshelves. “I am sorry to hear that.”

“I appreciate your sincerity, but you know William. This is, I fear, what comes from a thirst for power.” Franklin took a deep breath and then let it out in a long sigh. “Back to business, how are you, dear boy?”

A slight smile lifted his lips. Only Benjamin Franklin could think of him—a thirty-six-year-old man—as a dear boy. “I am faring quite well.”

“Ah. . .an answer that is vague.” Light laughter came out of his friend’s mouth as he shook his head.

“You taught me well.” Matthew grinned back.

“We will get to the crux of it in a moment. . . . Have you tried an air bath yet?”

“No.” Matthew tried to keep a straight face. “I cannot say that I have. Nor have I had the privacy.”

“’Tis quite invigorating. Stimulating to the system.”

“I am sure.” Goodness, the subject needed to change. Sitting in front of an open window in nary a piece of clothing wasn’t his idea of *healthy*.

“Still no word from Thomson?” Franklin tapped his fingers on the back of the chair in front of him.

“Not yet.”

“Well, things are escalating quickly, and we must act.” Franklin rubbed his hands together. “With the British troops occupying Boston, I believe they have drawn a line.”

“What do you mean?”

“A line that will only lead to war.”

Relations with Britain had been declining for a long time. The Tea Act giving the East India Trading Company a monopoly on tea trade made men in Boston so angry they dressed up as Indians and tossed over three hundred crates of tea into the harbor. In retaliation, Parliament passed the Intolerable Acts—laws denying constitutional rights, natural rights, and colonial charters to Massachusetts. Fear this denial of basic rights would spread through all the Colonies had pushed many in America to the point of revolution.

Loyalists still faithful to the Crown of England were in direct conflict with the Patriots and their quest for independence and relief from taxation.

Matthew pondered the quandary. What did the King seek to gain?

The taxations were getting out of hand and many of the colonists were tired of being ruled by a monarchy across the ocean and paying the debts of England through their taxes. Something wasn't right. And people knew it.

Now the British were keeping trade from other countries from coming to the Colonies, so of course, the Patriots were discussing boycotting all trade from Britain. All appeals to the Crown had no effect, so they were once again at an impasse. The Continental Congress was meeting to determine a way to appeal to the King. Again.

Matthew shook his head.

"What is ruminating in that fine mind of yours?" Ben cocked an eyebrow.

"Just thinking on how we arrived at this place in time. You are correct to say that we must act. Tumultuous times are upon us."

"But they are also exciting times, don't you agree? Our thirteen governments with their people cover a great deal more land than that of England. We have got fifty-six men from twelve of the Colonies coming together for the first time at this Continental Congress. We are going through growing pangs, are we not? Imagine what could be accomplished if we can persuade the Loyalists that we'd be better off independent of England?"

Matthew held up a hand and gave a slight laugh. "I admire your enthusiasm, my friend. And I do agree, but it has been almost ten years already, and we have a long way to go before we are free of British rule. Besides, the Loyalists are too afraid of the British military." He couldn't help the sigh that escaped his lips. Exhaustion pounded behind his eyes. It was a legitimate fear. England's army and navy were the mightiest in the world.

"I hear the weariness in your voice, my boy. This has taken its

toll on you, has it not?”

Could he tell his mentor the truth? That any thoughts of a bright future seemed blotted out by the prospect of war? Matthew could manage a simple nod but couldn't allow his emotions to climb their way to the surface. “We'll do anything for our cause, will we not?”

“Yes, we have all made sacrifices, but this is *me* you're speaking to. You may not be my flesh and blood, but I can see what's lurking behind your eyes and I understand, even though you are working so hard to keep it hidden.” Ben came forward and put a hand on Matthew's shoulder. “The future is hard to look forward to now, yes, but remember that all we are seeking to accomplish is for a better future for our children and grandchildren.”

But what if he never had a family to give a brighter future to? Those children and grandchildren that Ben spoke of. He was already sacrificing his life and reputation for the cause of the Patriots—which was a truly great endeavor—but the thought of having not one soul to pass along that bright future to made a deep sorrow wash over him. At age thirty-six, settling down and starting a family in the middle of this turmoil were hard to imagine. In fact, they were quite unthinkable. And very selfish of him. Time to get his mind back on the tasks at hand.

Three taps on the door—the signal they were *supposed* to use—brought Matthew out of his thoughts and back to the present. He gave Ben a look and smirk. “See? That is how it works.”

Benjamin just winked at him.

The master of the house entered the room with a smile on his face. “Good evening, gentlemen.”

As Charles walked over to his desk, he motioned for them to sit. “A boycott will be in place the first of December.”

“Of all British goods? That should shake things up quite a bit.” Benjamin tapped his knee.

“It should, yes.” Charles pulled out papers. Most likely his notes from the meeting. He perused them for a moment. “Each of the Colonies has been encouraged to develop and train their own militia.”

Another hearty nod from Benjamin. “Good, good.”

Matthew took a deep breath. Just what he’d suspected. At some point soon, war would be upon them. A reminder that it was a good thing he *didn’t* have a family. This was no way to live—with no foreseeable, positive outlook for the future. Would this revolution ever end?

Another three taps on the door.

“Come in.” Charles looked to the door.

George Washington opened the door and walked in with a nod. Matthew stood to greet his childhood friend. As a delegate to Congress, George would also have good insight into the meeting. “Good to see you, Matthew. I hope I have not missed too much.” He smiled as he gave a firm handshake.

“Not at all.” Matthew shook his head. “Charles had just begun to tell us of the boycott and preparations for militia.”

George took a deep breath and then sighed heavily. “I believe the time has come.” He ran fingers through his powdered hair leaving streaks of auburn in their wake. “We have much to discuss.”

The group gathered chairs closer to the fire as George launched into his recall of the Continental Congress.

As the youngest in the group, Matthew sat back and listened to the insight from the men around him. While George was only a few years his senior, his longtime friend had much more experience in practically everything. The smartest and strongest man he’d ever known, George was steadfast and noble, and Matthew couldn’t think of a man he respected more. Thomson was a few years older than George and had the distinguished appointment of

secretary for the Congress. Then there was Benjamin Franklin. The eldest in the group was one of the most amazing men Matthew had ever met. Author, inventor, and statesman—and everything in between—Benjamin was his mentor and friend. Providence had blessed Matthew to be among these ranks.

Ben looked to him. “Matthew, I know you have been preparing for this for a good while, but the risks are high. Are you sure you are fully ready for what lies ahead?”

Knowing what his mentor spoke of, Matthew took a deep breath and nodded. “I am a Patriot and will do whatever it takes.” He might have just laid his whole life and future on the line. But he couldn’t be selfish. Not at a time like this. At least he could help provide a brighter future for those who would come behind him.

Several hours later, the group disbanded. While everyone else could go out the front door, Matthew had to wait and exit through a tunnel from the main house that came up into the barn. It had been dug for just this purpose, and now was the time to put it to use. Even though Philadelphia wasn’t as tricky as Boston, there were still eyes and ears everywhere. He’d worked too long for the cause and built relationships to aid in it for him to be caught this early in the game.

As he pulled the black cloak around his shoulders, he made his way through the tunnel. Once in the barn, he tugged his cocked, felt hat lower over his brow. The sweet smell of the hay mixed with the strong aroma of manure. As he left the protection of the building, a crisp wind hit his face and gave him an even better excuse for concealment.

Lifting the stock around his neck closer to his chin, he moved forward. With a flick of his hand, he pulled his cloak’s collar high up around his ears. Even though it was dark, he couldn’t take the risk of being seen. From here on out Matthew must play the part

of the Loyalist. He needed to entrench himself among the enemy. Abandon his friends and everyone else he knew, so that he could become the man he'd been creating for such a time as this. The only way to win independence would be to win the trust of those loyal to the Crown and gather every bit of information that he could.

It hadn't been easy forging friendships the past couple of years. Especially with his ties to George. Many had been hesitant to allow a childhood friend of a staunch Patriot into their midst. But since William Franklin—the Royal Governor of New Jersey—had vouched for Matthew, and William was known to be at odds with his own father—a Patriot—Matthew had finally found some footing among the men who had influence.

His secret advantage was Ben. The older man had incredible ties and relationships to England. In fact, he'd spent a lot of his time traveling back and forth and speaking on behalf of the Colonies. But the open lines of communication were failing. While deep down, Matthew knew that the elder Franklin was heart-broken the revolution was dividing him from his son, it still amazed Matthew how Ben didn't hesitate to share what he could about how to work his way into William's good graces. For the good of the cause.

And it had worked. Matthew found himself in the inner circle with the Royal Governor. But as tensions mounted, he would have to be on guard continually.

The depth of the situation hit him. No one could know he wasn't just another affluent Loyalist seeking to better his country.

No one could know the real Matthew Weber. Not anymore.

His life was now on the altar of the Patriot's cause. And he'd give everything—even his last breath—for freedom.

He was a spy.



Friday, October 21, 1774

Boston

Faith Lytton Jackson stood and smiled as her butler announced Mrs. White. “Thank you, Clayton.” She nodded and rushed across the parlor to greet her friend. “Lavonia, what a pleasure to see you.” The lavender silk on her friend was lovely. “Your dress is enchanting. Is it new?”

“The pleasure is all mine, my dear. Although I wish the circumstances were different.” The white-haired woman smiled back and gave Faith a brief hug. “And yes, this just arrived from Paris, but I wasn’t sure if the color suited me. I must say, that yellow silk taffeta on *you* is simply gorgeous. I knew it would be.”

“You do have a talent for choosing the best fabrics, Lavonia.”

“I might have an eye for the fabric, but you, my dear, you make them exquisite.”

Clayton announced several other guests and kept Faith from responding although she shot Lavonia a smile. Even in the direst of circumstances, her friend always found something to compliment.

Warmth filled the room as women she adored and trusted entered. A crackling fire in the massive stone fireplace added to the cozy feeling as everyone spoke of the contrasting chill in the air outside.

Faith greeted each one and invited them to sit. “Clayton, would you ask Sylvia to serve the tea, please?”

“Yes, ma’am.” Her stoic butler had been with her for more than a decade. He would do anything for her, she had no doubt. But she often wondered about his friends. Did he have any close confidants? Did anyone other than her staff care for the man? And was he always so stiff and reserved? The thoughts made her chuckle to

herself. Why on earth was she all of a sudden so concerned with Clayton? He'd always puzzled her, but he was loyal and trustworthy.

She gazed around the room and shot a prayer heavenward. *Lord, I need Your focus and divine wisdom. We need Your guidance now more than ever. Help us to do what we can.*

Strengthened by her prayer and resolve, Faith quieted the women and stood before them. "We shall begin our meeting today by continuing through the reading of the Psalms." She picked up her Bible. "I believe we are beginning the 119th?"

Several murmurs of affirmation filled the room.

Faith began reading:

*"Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways. Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently. O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments. I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments. I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly. Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."*

The ladies looked to her when she was done reading. Where to begin?

"Ladies, as you know, the revolution is intensifying. It has not been easy thus far, and I dare say it will only get worse. Especially with the British troops here. We have committed to do what we can

to help, and it is vital that we do our part.” Faith took a deep breath before diving into the next discussion. “But we also need to tread more carefully than ever.”

“What is it that you are unwilling to say, Faith?” Lavonia raised one eyebrow with her question. Always to the point, she was smart and steadfast. “No need to guard your words with us. We can shoulder the responsibilities.”

Murmurs and nods filled the room.

With a sigh Faith allowed her shoulders to relax a bit. “The leaders of the Patriots have asked for our help again and they have also asked us to be exceedingly vigilant in whom we speak to and trust. The dangers have increased along with the number of infiltrators.”

Several of the women’s faces turned ashen.

Claudia leaned forward. “So I take it they are worried about spies? Even among the women?” Voicing the words that must have been on the ladies’ minds, her friend shook her head and *tsked*.

The room erupted in chatter.

Faith held up a hand and waited for the women to quiet. “Yes. Ladies, it is imperative that we keep everything we speak of here *only* amongst ourselves. We will not be able to invite any new ladies to join us again for a while.”

Lavonia stood and joined arms with Faith. “I think we all understand the depth of importance to which we hold this secrecy, right, ladies?”

Affirmation filled the room.

Lavonia continued, “I suggest we make a pact. Right here and now.”

The other ladies stood and made a circle. No hesitation. No questions. Lavonia stuck her hand in the middle and swore herself to secrecy on behalf of the Patriot cause. Fifteen other women joined their voices with Mrs. White’s and stacked their hands in

the middle of the circle.

Lavonia grinned. “ ‘Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.’ I have another suggestion. I think we should start memorizing more scripture, ladies. To help us through the tough times ahead and to keep our minds trained.”

“Oh, yes!” Margaret echoed. “ ’Tis also another good reason for meetings. We must be vigilant in how we plan and what we say. Everything must have a purpose and a reason in case we are questioned.”

Lavonia pointed at Margaret. “Excellent point.”

Faith beamed. This group of friends amazed her. Already thinking ahead. No one could ever say the Patriot women weren’t intelligent and thoughtful.

The other ladies nodded and took their seats again. All looked to Faith.

As she looked around the room and met each woman’s gaze, a powerful emotion flowed through her. Pride. In who they were. In what they were trying to accomplish. They might not be able to serve in the government or fight in any battles—God forbid it get to that point—but they could serve their cause valiantly nonetheless.

When her gaze met that of Mary Wallace, she realized this young woman was the newest member of their group and probably didn’t understand all they had already accomplished. “Mary, I apologize. I just realized you are quite new to us. Do you have any questions?”

The young woman shook her head. “I will listen in and ask my questions at the end, if that’s all right with you.”

“Of course. I just want to make sure you are comfortable.”

“Quite. Thank you.”

Faith looked back to the rest. Mary was married to a man whom George knew well, so Faith had complete confidence that

the woman could be trusted. But since she hadn't been part of the group for as long as the rest of them, it might be a bit daunting to take it all in. "Well, ladies. Back in '69, we produced with our other sisters in arms over forty-thousand skeins of yarn and wove 20,522 yards of cloth. But now we need to do more than just weave and make yarn. We may be asked to do a great many things to help the men."

"We are willing," Lavonia piped up.

Nods were all around. Shoulders straightened. Chins lifted.

Sylvia arrived with the tea at that moment, and Faith smiled. God was good to anoint them with such spirit. "Let us bless the tea and then we will discuss the details."

After giving thanks, Faith took a seat as Sylvia served the tea.

Mary came and sat next to her. "Might I ask you a few questions now, Mrs. Jackson?"

"Of course, and please. . . call me Faith." She nibbled on a piece of shortbread—her favorite since childhood—and let the buttery goodness melt on her tongue. Maybe she could get to know more about this young wife of George's friend.

"You are a widow?"

"Yes." The word no longer pained her since she'd been a widow for twelve years.

"May I ask about your husband and what happened to him?" Mary took a sip of her tea.

Faith smiled. "Well, you know George. I was a child when my parents died, and he became my guardian. Over the years, he wrote hundreds of letters and visited as often as he could. And most of the time, he brought someone along with him. Normally one of his soldiers. Joseph—my husband—was one of those visitors. He told George one day that he loved my spunky personality and George, of course, told me all about it. It wasn't long before Joseph and I

were married. Sadly, he was killed in battle only a week after our wedding.”

Mary laid a hand over one of Faith’s. “I am deeply sorry. You never remarried?”

Faith shook her head and took a long sip of tea. The mint leaf Sylvia had placed in her cup with the tea refreshed her senses. Something she needed a lot of lately. “No. While I did not know Joseph extremely well, I did love him. I entered our union with my inheritance from my family, and he was quite wealthy. So there was that. . . I wouldn’t be destitute if I didn’t marry again.

“But it was devastating to lose him so soon after we married. My young heart and mind had already faced so much loss. I felt numb. After mourning for a year, I thought I would be ready to consider suitors, but it wasn’t to be. My heart was not ready. Even if society dictated that it should. Then, when I finally decided I *was* ready. . . Well, I found that men were interested in my fortune but not necessarily in *me*.” She chuckled. “It didn’t help that the suitors seemed to lose interest as soon as they found out I had my own opinions and wasn’t willing to give up my independence. So now I find ’tis best to just keep to myself and work with the women for our cause.”

A smile lifted Mary’s lips. “I imagine that George is quite a formidable man to cross as well. What does he have to say in all this?”

“Oh, he’d love for me to remarry so he can be ‘Uncle George’ to my children, but I’m afraid it is probably too late for me.”

Twinkling eyes met hers as Mary laid a hand on top of Faith’s. “It is never too late, and you are a beautiful woman.”

Even though she longed for children of her own, Faith wasn’t sure about remarrying. God would have to bring the right man directly to her if she were to consider it. And she’d have to know—without a doubt—that she could trust him with her life. Her father

and George had set high standards for her to compare any man to. “I appreciate the compliment, Mary, but we will have to leave it in the Lord’s hands. For now, we have much work to keep our hands busy.”

Mary nodded. “You are correct. I promise not to play matchmaker.”

“Good. Because George does enough of that already.”

They laughed together and then Mary’s face sobered. “Back to the reason for this meeting. My husband has sent me with a private message for you. Instructions for our group.”

Faith took the paper offered and opened the message. She couldn’t help but gasp at some of the instructions. Her eyes widened as she glanced at Mary.

Her friend covered her hand again and nodded. “Now. . .what can I do to help?”