Ecorse Light was located in the Detroit River just north of Mud Island, across from Ecorse.

Imaginary Lenses: Reflected and Refracted Great Lakes Lighthouse Stories

Lake Erie

Marblehead Lighthouse (Sandusky Bay Lighthouse) Lake Erie

Built in 1819, the Marblehead Lighthouse was known as the Sandusky Bay Light until 1870. Guarding Sandusky Bay, it is considered the oldest, continuously operated lighthouse on the Great Lakes. In 1858, the United States government replaced the light's whale oil lamps with a single kerosene lantern magnified by a Fresnel lens. During the Civil War, over 10,000 Confederate soldiers were imprisoned on nearby Johnsons Island. They could see the lantern from their prison and they noted in their diaries that they looked at the light and dreamed of home.

This story happened in imagination.

The Lights of Home

"Hey Joel, come over and have a swig of corn beer with us. Just opened tonight!"

"We'd better not, Slim. It's about two minutes until Light's Out and you remember what happened to that captain from Arkansas just last week."

"What happened to him?" Slim looked bleary eyed and he leaned slightly against the wall. Captain Joel Thompson, CSA, felt a nervous tremor in the pit of his stomach. Life here on Johnson's Island prison for Confederate officers in the middle of Sandusky Bay in Lake Erie could turn ugly on a Yankee challenge.

"He was late getting back to his room and the guard shot him. You'd better get back in your room right quick."

Slim held the cup of corn beer over his head with one hand while he opened the door to his quarters with the other hand. "I'm goin' Joel, I'm goin'."

Joel sighed with relief and the tremor diminished to a shiver. "Keep up the good going," Joel warned, closing his own door in Block 11 Room 3.

He sighed as he walked into his room. The living conditions at Johnson's Island were a fingertip improvement from life in the field. Captain Joel Thompson and three of his fellow Confederate officers had been and were still proud members of the Second Regiment, South Carolina Volunteers. Joel closed his eyes and relived the day he and his boyhood friend Howard Carpenter had enlisted. He swayed on the back of his horse Belle on the ride to the courthouse where he met Howard Carpenter. As they stood in the recruiting line together Joel watched the way the sunlight traced leaf patterns on the pond in front of the courthouse and how the wind ruffled the water like daddy's hand ruffling his hair when he was a boy. Colonel Anderson signed Joel and Carpenter into his regiment and advised them that they would march out in two days. That night Joel and his wife Lacy plowed through the sand on the beach to get closer to the Murray's Cove lighthouse that stood on a narrow spit of land jutting into the ocean.

"I'll be back by fall," he assured her. "Me and Carpenter and the boys will go whip those Yankees and then I'll be back home in time for harvest."

"I'll harvest until you get home," Lacy assured him.

"I know I can depend on you," he said.

Lacy squeezed his hand. "The light from the lighthouse marks a path to heaven that I pray I will take alongside you someday."

Joel squeezed his hand back. "I'd prefer to take the path with you, but much later than sooner."

She smiled at him and the light reflected in her blue eyes." We'll take it together," she said.

The next morning Lacy rode to the courthouse with Joel. She kissed him goodbye directly in front of Howard Carpenter and the rest of the men who had assembled and were getting ready to march out and fight the Yankees. Even though she remained at their house by the Murray's Cove Light, Lacy marched with him in all of his campaigns, bouncing on the back of her horse Ben. She rode next to him at Manassas and celebrated the Confederate victory along with Joel and the other men, and she encouraged him to project his Rebel yell all of the way into Washington D.C.

Joel and Carpenter were both wounded at Gettysburg during Pickett's charge. Even now at Johnson's Island Joel could hear the boom booming of the Confederate guns that were supposed to soften up the Yankees and silence their artillery. But even though the Confederates had hollered the Rebel Yell until they were hoarse and had fired their guns until they were red hot, Joel and his fellow soldiers had to advance over open fields for three quarters of a mile under heavy Union artillery and rifle fire. Although some of the Confederates breached the low stone wall that shielded many of the Union defenders, they couldn't hold their ground and the

Yankees repulsed them with over 50 percent casualties. The Yankees defeated the Confederates at Gettysburg after a three day battle and ended Lee's campaign into Pennsylvania. Joel took a Minnie ball in the shoulder and Carpenter one in the leg. They were helping each other back to their lines when a detachment of Yankee cavalry captured them and took them prisoner.

Joel and Carpenter found themselves on a train bound for New York City. Joel remembered the journey as a painful haze of long jarring days, and fever racked nights calling for Lacy. Sometimes he knew he felt her cool hand stroking his forehead. He and the train finally stopped at Fort Columbus in New York Harbor. He arrived at Fort Columbus still feverish. That night as he tossed and turned and moaned on his bed, he felt a cool cloth on his forehead.

"Lacy, is that you?"he groaned.

"I'm Eben, friend a gentle voice said. Can I give you some water?"

Eben bathed Joel's forehead with the cool cloth for the rest of the night and gave him sips of cool water.

"Eben, are you a Yankee?" he asked the next morning.

"I'm a Yankee, but a gentleYankee. Are you a Reb?"

"I'm a Reb, but I don't think all Yankees are damn."

"Why aren't we fighting?"

"This is a hospital. We're both here recovering from our wounds so we can go back and fight each other. But let's be friends until then."

By the time the orders came through for Joel and Carpenter to be transferred to Johnson's Island, Eben and Joel were friends.

"Johnson's Island! What's that?" Joel asked Eben.

"It's a place," Eben told him. It's on an island in the middle of Lake Erie. It's a prison where we send Southern officers.

"You send them to do what? Die?"

"What about Andersonville?" Eben asked Joel.

They debated prisons and prisoners of war until Joel and Howard Carpenter boarded the train bound for Ohio .Joel and Eben exchanged addresses. Eben slapped Joel lightly on his back. "If you ever need money or anything, let me know," he said.

Carpenter turned his head while Joel slapped Eben back. "I'll let you know," he said.

Joel and Carpenter sat silently side by side on their railroad trip to Johnson's Island. Joel remembered the sound of the huge iron gates swinging shut behind him and the voices of the other prisoners calling, "Fresh fish! Fresh fish!" Some of the prisoners welcomed their newly arrived comrades and others relieved them of the private property they had managed to bring with them.

"This has got to be the coldest and the most secure prison in the entire world," Joel thought to himself as he surveyed his cold room. Johnson's Island Prison, lay just across Sandusky Bay from the main land, on the west end of the island. The prison official's quarters were on the outside and the enclosure containing the prison buildings occupied most of the

available space. Large swinging gates kept the prisoners inside. The northern winter was an effective jailer. It keep the Confederates with their sunny and warm weather genes rooted to their small stoves and the winter cold discouraged most of them from attempting to cross several miles of ice to Canada.

"They keep a pretty good watch on us anyway," Joel told Carpenter, when he first suggested escape. "They have their blocks."

The blocks system made it easier for the guards to keep track of the prisoners. The buildings, all thirteen of them, faced each other in two rows and were separated by a street about 150 feet wide that formed a campus or parade ground. They were ordinary frame buildings, weather boarded but unsealed on the inside and offering little protection against the Northern winter. Sinks were located in the rear of the buildings, one for each block. Only two or three men were allowed to visit them at once, even through the blocks contained about 250 men each. The buildings were called blocks and they stood six in each row. Each block contained three rooms on the upper and two on the lower floor with the middle room upstairs being the smallest.

Coughing deeply, Joel tossed the package of biscuits that Carpenter had given him on the wobbly wooden table, draped his coat over the splintery chair, and sat down and drank a cup of his own corn beer supply. He answered the guard's knock at the door with a "Present and accounted for." Then he flopped down on the pallet in front of the window and pulling the wool blanket up to his chin, he stared out the uncurtained window watching for the warm and beckoning beacon of the Sandusky Bay Light.

He couldn't stop shivering so he got up from the pallet, gulped down another cup of corn beer, and put his coat back on. He estimated that the air temperature in his room had to be above freezing, maybe about 50 degrees. He settled deeply into the thin mattress under the blanket. He had been one of the lucky Johnson's Island prisoners who had been issued a woolen blanket. The winter temperature on this island in Lake Erie usually dipped down far below zero, some winters as low as 24 degrees below zero, and the winds whipping off of Lake Erie made the air seem even colder. Often the winds piled snow roof high against the barracks buildings and often they shot snow like bullets against the faces of the shivering prisoners. Often the winds piled snow against the camp gates and froze it into place. The winds blew frigid blasts across the waters of Sandusky Bay and Lake Erie and turned their open waters into solid sheets of ice.

Even though he had put his coat back on and pulled the wool blanket up to his chin, Joel felt shivers rising from deep within his body and sending tremors down his arms and legs. He scrunched deeper under the blanket and focused his eyes on the window. The lamp in the lighthouse radiated warmth. The lamp in the lighthouse shone a warm trail across the ice highway to Canada and from Canada he could make his way home to South Carolina. He closed his eyes and the warm yellow light stayed alive behind him. The Murray's Cove light a half mile from his house lit his way up the rocky cliff to his house. Lacy stood in the doorway, looking beautiful in her blue cotton plaid dress. Behind her in the kitchen the fire crackled cheerfully on the hearth and all of his favorite dishes waited for him on the table, including fried chicken and biscuits. Their bed with the goose down pillows and comforter waited warm and inviting. Lacy held out her arms. He was home.

Joel opened his eyes to the same warm glow of the light but the rest of the room was cold. He shivered. The rest of him was freezing. He blew into the air and his breath fogged back at him. "Damn, Johnson's Island had to be the coldest place in the entire North!"

"This Johnson's Island prison has got to be the coldest place in the entire North," he said to Howard Carpenter the next morning at breakfast mess. "It's got to be colder than the North Pole."

Carpenter looked at him intently. "This here corn meal mush is good and hot, with no weevils or rats in it," he said loudly. Under the cover of the clatter of dishes and voices he whispered, "It's so cold here want to escape with me during the January thaw?"

"The January thaw isn't always what we expect it to be?" he said.

"Maybe this time we'll be lucky", Carpenter told him.

To Joel's recollection the January thaw took about a month's time instead of a few weeks, but one day at the end of February he saw snow melting on the parade ground. After breakfast that day, he and three other men were assigned to place carved wooden headboards in the Confederate Cemetery so they ventured outside. Not only did Joel see signs of a thaw but also signs of men starving. Gaunt, cadaverous men with a far away look in their eyes and hunger and privation showing in every line of their emaciated bodies stood in rows on the parade ground. Joel saw one man plunge his hand into the swill barrel, let the water drain through his fingers, and devour the scraps of food left in his hands.

Joel and his men walked on to the Confederate Cemetery and placed the wooden headboards on the graves of Lt. G.W. Lewis, and Captain John M. Barryman. As the men worked two ladies wearing woolen capes appeared in the cemetery and slowly walked over to the soldiers. The one in the black cape held out a package. “Would you like some chocolate and coffee?” she asked.

One of the soldiers with Joel eagerly took the package and tore it open. He waved a packet of coffee and a packet of chocolate in each hand. “Thank you so much, ma’am, “he said to the lady with the black cape.

The other lady, the one wearing the gray cape, smiled at Joel. “Would you like some chocolate and coffee as well?” she asked him.

“Thank you, ma’am. I’ll take a package for later.”

She handed him the package. “I have a question to ask you sir,” she said.

He bowed. “Captain Joel Thompson.” Joel knew her question. It was the same question that people in the North always asked Confederate prisoners of war or any other Confederate soldiers they happened to encounter. She smiled at him again and he noticed that she had green eyes. “Do you think you are right?” she asked him. Joel dusted the snow off the top of the wooden tombstone he was fitting on the grave and he motioned for her to sit on it. She spread her skirts and sat down and he stood beside her.

“Ma’am, I’ve heard this question so often that I will answer it in President Lincoln’s style by beginning with ‘it reminds me.’ It reminds me of a story of the couple who took their bridal

trip on an ocean steamer with the usual result. As the husband returned from trips to the rail, his young wife would ask, “Reginald darling, are you sick? Finally, Reginald darling replied, ‘God heavens, Rebecca, do you think I am doing this for fun?”

The lady laughed politely with him, but soon she and her companion left their snowy tombstone seats and Joel and his two companions were alone with their newly marked graves. The other two men went back to their barracks to brew their coffee and eat their chocolate. Joel stood thoughtfully by the tombstone of John M. Barryman. John’s room had been right below his and they had spent many quiet evenings together drinking corn beer and refighting the battle of Gettysburg with different results for the Confederacy. Then the Yankee winter had covered Johnson’s Island and the bitter wind had provoked John Barryman’s cough into pneumonia. After spending two weeks in the hospital barracks, he had died and was buried in the Confederate Cemetery, leaving his friend Joel Thompson to fit his tombstone in place.

With tears in his eyes Joe saluted his friend John Barryman’s grave. The wind grabbed his thin trousers and tried to yank them off. It sawed through his cloth jacket and woolen cap and stabbed him with stinging icicles. Joel pulled his cap more tightly around his ears.

He saluted again. “You have been a good and true comrade and I’ll miss you.”

He thought about the last time he saw John. He and John were charging the Yankees on Cemetery Hill and scattering them with the Rebel Yell. Then a Yankee bullet hit him in the shoulder and he writhed on the ground in pain. John stopped his wound from bleeding and helped him get himself and Carpenter out of the rain of lead. They were sitting under a bullet riddled bush when a detachment of Yankees stumbled upon them and took them prisoner. John

stuck by his side like a cockle bur and made sure that the Yankee surgeon dressed his wound. John even insisted that the doctor on Johnson's Island tend to Joel's wound. John had saved his life, but he couldn't save John's. Joel didn't notice the snow that covered his hat and jacket. It covered his boots and slid down his neck from his face before he felt its cold.

Hell wasn't hot. Hell was cold and barren like Johnson's Island, Joel decided as he trudged back to his barracks room. In hell it got dark at 5 o'clock and even when the sun shone during the day in the winter it didn't warm the air above 30 degrees. Hell was hardtack and corn bread and salt pork to eat most of the time and no fruit, not many vegetables, and not enough to eat most of the time. The Sandusky lighthouse beacon had already started to flash by the time Joel got back to his room. He took off his wet coat and draped it over the one flimsy wooden chair. He moved the chair closer to the fire. Through the uncurtained window he saw the light flashing its warm message, but even the light could not help him get warm. Even after he crawled into his bed under his wool blanket he couldn't get warm. "The next time Carpenter asks I just might agree to escape with him," Joel told the light.

"Let's escape," Joel told Carpenter the next morning. The fire had burned down and Joel shivered in the cold room. He got the fire started and the wood crackled and it sent out waves of warmth, but he still shivered. "Let's escape today," he urged Carpenter.

"We're goin'," Carpenter said. "Tonight's the night."All day Carpenter and Joel and four other prisoners, two from Virginia and two from Tennessee, were busy. They made a crude ladder by tying the legs of a bench with a clothesline across a board at spaces of about three feet. They gathered as many civilian clothes as they could from their friends in the prison. When

darkness fell and between flashes of the lighthouse, they crept past the stakes to the bottom of the fence on their stomachs. The changing of the guard made this move even more dangerous, but working together, they managed to slip under the fence without the sentinel spotting them. At about 10:30 that night, the men slipped, slid, and tumbled across the ice to the shore of the Peninsula. They heard the sentries cry "all's well" as they itched their way carefully through fields and wood and over fences. A few hours before daybreak they stumbled upon a half frozen straw stack and took shelter in the middle of it. Later they found two horses and bridles in a barn, mounted, two men to each horse, mounted and galloped toward freedom.

As their first day of freedom wore on, the two officers from Tennessee and the two from Virginia were overcome by the cold and decided that they couldn't continue their flight. They hadn't been able to get enough warm clothes so they decided that instead of hindering the others they would return to the prison. They pledged that they would not divulge the names of Joel Thompson or Howard Carpenter.

Joel and Carpenter continued their journey along Lake Erie. They crossed the Maumee River at Toledo about daylight, and joined a company of workmen on their way to work. At noon they bought and devoured cheese and crackers at a country store, their first food in thirty hours.

That night the men passed through Monroe, Michigan, during a snowstorm and about ten o'clock they found a French Canadian who gave them shelter. They resumed their journey the next morning and after traveling about a mile, Joel discovered that he had left his wallet behind,

a wallet containing papers showing him to be an officer in the Confederate army. He went back to the house and retrieved the wallet without incident.

Joel and Carpenter made their way safely to a spot near Grosse Isle, Michigan. They spotted an old man and Joel approached him. "How do we get across the River?" he asked the man.

"In eighty winters I have never seen such a cold snap. You'd better wait."

The two fugitives couldn't wait. They ventured out onto the river ice. The briers and marsh reeds made for slow progress and soon the ice turned dangerous. A storm a few days earlier had broken up the ice and they had to scramble over piled up blocks of ice. Joel felt the ice giving away and one of his feet broke through. He saved himself by leaning on firmer ice. Carpenter knelt and pulled him out, but his trouser legs immediately froze stiff. The sweeping north wind would eventually freeze them to death, but a return to the United States would be equally fatal. Joel moved ahead about ten feet and took a bearing from the North Star. He could see a light burning on the Canadian shore and he and Carpenter moved toward it. Near the shore they ran into another air hole in the ice. They slid up and down looking for firm ice, but found none. Desperate, they ran across the section one at a time. The ice creaked but didn't break.

Then Joel spotted the light. It shone across the icy river like the Murray's Cove light.. The lantern looked like it was placed about 50 feet above the high water mark and when the wind blew the snow away, Joel could see it plainly. He and Carpenter made their way through more reeds and touched firm ground. Joel bent over and kissed the ground, as he had vowed to do if they ever reached the safety of Canada.

"The ground kissing might be a little early," Carpenter told him. "We better make sure it's Canada."

They struggled up a hill and stumbled onto a small wooden shack. An Indian woman was inside and she told them that they had indeed reached Canada. They had landed on Bois Blanc Island. She gave them food and a warm bed and the next morning led them over the frozen river to Amherstburg. This time Joel kissed the ground twice, scattering dirt as he did so. The Indian woman took them to a general store where the briskly English proprietor offered to take them to Windsor in his sleigh. The next morning they set out in thirty degree below zero temperatures as their host cheerfully informed them, but they huddled under the carriage blankets and curled their toes on warm bricks and shivered their way to Winsor. At Windsor their host introduced them to his brother, who owned and operated the Whitecastle Inn. He offered to give them room and board in exchange for their work as laborers. They stayed and worked for several months, trying to earn enough money to go home.

During the next few months Joel and Carpenter met a parade of Confederate sympathizers, including C.L. Vallandigham, the Copperhead leader who fought for the Confederacy with his words and deeds in the heartland of the Union. His pro-South rhetoric resounded so loudly that it repeatedly reached the ears of President Abraham Lincoln and he ordered Vallandigham deported to the Confederacy.

Joel personally thought that for all of his bluff and bluster and airs, Vallandigham talked out of so many sides of his mouth he couldn't connect them anywhere. Joel liked Lt. George Wagner, one of John Hunt Morgan's men better. Lt. Wagner told them how he and two of his

fellow soldiers picked the lock on a Yankee prison and stole some Yankee uniforms and horses. "We put on them uniforms and rode down the road like we belonged there-pretended we were Yankee soldiers going to join our regiment- and we got away with it. We rode all of the way to Lake Erie and stole and boat. We zigzagged through the Lake Erie Islands and we landed on the Canadian shore."

"Must have been summer when you did that," Joel said.

"It was late summer," Lt. Wagner told him. I don't know if we could have made it in the winter time. It gets cold here in Yankee land in the winter."

Joel shivered. "I know that real well."

"Make sure you escape in the spring or summer," Lt. Wager said. "But no matter what the season, make sure you escape."

Joel met several more of Morgan's men, but he remembered Lt. Wagner and his advice the best.

Joel and Carpenter worked for most of the spring and summer, but they still were $200 short of the passage money to Montreal. Where would they get the money?

Then Joel remembered Eben and his offer to help. He wrote to Eben and asked him to borrow the funds to buy tickets to Montreal.

"You'll never hear from him," Carpenter scoffed.

Two weeks after Joel sent the letter asking for the money, Joel waved the money under Carpenter's disbelieving nose.

"I never thought a Yank had a heart," Carpenter said as they boarded the train to Montreal where they had other Southern friends to help them.

'Not all of them do, but Eben does. He has a very warm heart," Joel said, patting his pocketbook.

The trip up the St. Lawrence River to the ocean and to Bermuda went smoothly. When they arrived in Bermuda they sailed on the blockade runner Advance to North Carolina. Joel left Carpenter in North Carolina and made his way home to South Carolina.

By now his shoes were in tatters and he had to put straw on the bottom so he could walk. By now his clothes were as ragged as his breath was from climbing the hills and navigating the valleys. He was getting closer to home. He could feel it in his heart. He could feel Lacy's nearness now, her heart beating in time with his own as he traveled the last fifty miles to Murray's Cove on foot. His feet stumbled over unfamiliar roads and paths through thick woods and at night his eyes frantically searched the sky for the Murray's Cove light.

The air was warmer now that he neared home. The scent of catalpa blossoms and perfumed the air and the warm breeze stirring the palmettos made him throw off his cape and carry it tucked under his arm. One particularly warm day he noticed that he was even perspiring. Oh the joy of perspiration! He never thought he would perspire again after the deep bitter cold of Johnson's Island. He licked a drop of sweat from his hand and laughed out loud.

He rounded a bend in the trail and there far below on the beach he saw them. Lacy stood in the full warm glow of the Murray's Cove light which mysteriously did not flash but stood still as if deliberately providing a radiant backdrop for Lacy. She stood there smiling, holding out her arms, and he heard her welcoming cry. He rushed to take her in his arms.

Then the Sandusky Light flashed and he coughed in his bed, his cursed cold bed on Johnson's Island.

Erie Land Light-Lake Erie

The first Erie Land Light entered service in 1818, sharing the distinction with the original Buffalo Light House as the first on Lake Erie. It was built on a mainland bluff in 1818, not far from the site of Fort Presque Isle. The original tower measured 20 feet high and built on a high bank overlooking the harbor of Erie, Pennsylvania.

This story happened in imagination.

Morning Coffee at the Lighthouse

Captain Richard Butler loved Josie Juneau more than he did keeping the Erie Land Light and more than the Celina, the first vessel in the Lake Erie shipping empire he planned to build. He even loved Josie more than he loved the Erie Land Light itself and the way it sent a beacon of warmth and safety over the stormy Lake Erie waters.

Josie loved him too. He knew that she loved him beyond the reality of her intense amber eyes smiling into his when they danced at the parties and balls that marked the winter season in Erie. He knew that she loved him beyond the reality of the fact that with her father Pierre's wealth and her own earnings as a school teacher in the Anderson School he could not hope to give her more. He wanted to ask her to marry him, but he couldn't because all he had to offer her at the present was the light keeper's dwelling and hope of a prosperous future. Josie lived in a good home her father Pierre Juneau had provided for her and he heard that her father had agreed to let Count Henri Dubois court her. He'd have to forget about Josie, Richard decided. He would be polite and friendly to her, but he would never tell her how much he loved her. His resolve lasted until the next dance when they had a spirited discussion about what to do with Perry's brig the Niagara which had been sunk in Erie Harbor after the Battle of Lake Erie to preserve it.

“The Navy has been trying to decide rather to salvage the Niagara and reconstruct it or leave it in place,” Captain Butler told her. “I think they would be better off leaving it where it is.”

“Oh but Richard, think of the patriotism the Niagara would inspire if she sailed around the lakes and to the ocean and Americans could see her and heard the story of her glorious victory over the British fleet.”

He smiled down at her from his six foot mountain top to her five foot three foothill. He felt as tall as his Erie Land Light house, standing strong and stalwart on the bluffs overlooking Lake Erie. “You‘re interested in Perry and his battle. That happened seven years ago. Are you old enough to remember it?”

“I certainly am. Papa and I climbed to the light house and stood on the bluff and watched his fleet come back from Put-in-Bay. We also climbed to the light house and watched them scuttle the Niagara.”

“You’ve climbed to the light house several times, then, Josie?

“I like climbing to the lighthouse. Wild flowers grow in the grass that surrounds it and birds sing in the trees in the woods in back of it. Papa and I have gone there at night a few times and watched the light shining out over the water. It gleams like a pathway to heaven.”

Richard couldn’t help himself. He danced her out to the terrace and kissed her. She kissed him back and it seemed to him that she waited expectantly for him to say something. He did say something, but he knew it wasn’t what she really wanted to hear.

“You’re beautiful,” he murmured.

"Kiss me again," she murmured.

He kissed her again and he had to bite down hard on his tongue to keep from blurting out how much he loved her.

"You might come and call on me," she said as they walked back to the ball room.

"I might," he said. His heart sank at the hurt in her amber eyes, but he couldn't say anything else. If he uttered another syllable, he would be shouting to the sky and the light and the entire population of Erie how much he loved Josie Juneau.

Instead he walked her back to the ball room and delivered her to Count Henri Dubois. As he did so, he knew that he would always love her.

The next morning he had a visit from his friend Amos Yates. They sat at the wooden kitchen table sipping Richard's stronger than blacker than pitch coffee. "Look at this lighthouse Amos said. You know you love it, Richard. Why would you want to marry someone who would expect you to give up being keeper and go into the shipping business full time?

Richard defended her without a thought, even though he knew that Amos probably was right. "Josie wouldn't expect me to go into the shipping business full time."

"Josie would expect you to go into the shipping business full time. Look who her father is."

"Pierre Juneau would expect me to go into the shipping business full time. I'm not certain that Josie would."

"Richard, you'd better forget about her. She's going to marry Count DuBois."

Richard bowed his head over his cup so that Amos wouldn't see the tears in his eyes. How could he stay in Erie and watch Josie live with the Count? He would see her face in the lamps that he tended every night and in his dreams, just like he did now.

"Her father wants to post their banns for summer," Amos said.

"How do you know all of this?

"My sweetheart Claudette and Josie are bosom friends."

"I wish her happiness, Amos, that's all I can do."

"You can do more, Richard. You can find someone else. Claudette has several friends she is willing to introduce you to at the party."

"Tell Claudette thank you, but I need to do my own courting."

"Claudette isn't going to do your courting for you. She's just going to bring some of her friends to the party."

"I 'm pretty busy here at the lighthouse. I'm not sure I'll be at many more of the parties."

"It's just Josie! You can't forget her, can you?"

"I---Richard said just as both of them heard a knock at the door.

"Who will that be?" Amos asked.

"I wasn't expecting anyone, Amos. "Why don't you get it while I make more coffee."

Richard heard Amos answer the door and even above the clatter of the coffee pot he heard Amos gasp in surprise. Amos pulled on his coat and was out the door before Richard could turn around “I’ll see you tomorrow,” he called over his shoulder as he closed the door behind him.

Richard put the coffee pot on the stove and turned to the door. Josie Juneau stood there in her spring cloak and bonnet looking beautiful in the rays of spring sunshine that came in through the window. The first thing Richard said was “Oh.”

“May I come in?” Josie asked.

“Oh,” Richard repeated.

“Yes, I will take off my coat and have a cup of coffee,” Josie said. She took off her cloak and bonnet and hung them on the wooden pegs behind the kitchen door. Numbly Richard pulled a chair out from the table and she sat down.

Richard just stood and stared at how beautiful she looked sitting there in the sunlight. He stared at her so long that the coffee pot boiled over on the stove. Josie jumped up and moved the coffee pot over to the edge of the stove where it wouldn’t get the full heat. Richard managed to pour two cups of coffee.

“Do you like cream in your coffee?” he croaked.

She smiled at him, holding out her cup. “Two tablespoons of cream, please.”

Richard managed to add two tablespoons of cream to one cup. His hands shook as he handed the cup to her. He cradled the other cup in his hands and sat down. “Welcome to the lighthouse,” he said. “What can I do for you?”

He couldn’t help staring at how pretty Josie looked in the sunlight- the amber eyes that reminded him of sunshine through a bottle of claret, the black lustrous curls, the delicate features that reminded him of his little sister Vanessa’s doll.

“I need your help. I was hoping that you’d come with me to look for a grave that is supposed to be in the sand at the foot of the lighthouse.”

He swallowed and looked away from those amber eyes. “Whose grave would that be?” he asked.

“You’ve heard of James Bird, haven’t you?”

He looked back into her eyes and started singing. She did the same and together they sang:

“This is the saddest story you’ve ever heard,

The story of Perry’s deserter, James Bird,

He fought bravely with Perry as a soldier should,

Then his mama begged him to come home and he said he would.”

“You learned the same song in school that I did,” she laughed. “That’s the same one I teach my pupils, as well.”

"Do you really believed James Bird deserted Perry's Army or did he really just go home to help his Mama on the farm after his Papa died?" Josie asked him. "After all, he did come back."

"Richard sipped his coffee slowly and thoughtfully. "Yes, he reenlisted and came back and the commander ordered him arrested and tried for desertion, He and was it two other men were hanged aboard the Niagara or so the story goes."

"I think it was two other men. But Richard, I read that Commodore Perry issued an order to stop the execution but the order arrived at the Niagara too late. He was in Ohio or someplace at the time."

"Do you think that the verses in the song that say Bird was taken down from the gallows and buried in the sand under an old pine tree twisted from the wind and waves are true?" Richard asked her.

"You could hazard a better guess than I could about that. Would it be possible for a body to stay buried in the sand under the lighthouse bluff?"

He laughed. "Only if you wanted it to stay buried a hundred years or more. The sand gets pretty deep there and the waves keep washing in more."

"Papa received word from some of his men in Public Works this afternoon that some fishermen found a body in the sand under the lighthouse. They think it's James Bird."

He sat down his coffee cup with a thud. "Why would they think that?"

“The man was wearing the kind of clothes that the men of the Niagara crew wore. And they found a note in his pocket. “

“A note? What kind of note?” Richard wondered.

“It’s a handwritten pardon and it’s signed by Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry.”

“If that’s true, Josie, that changes Bird’ story and it certainly changes the history of Bird’s family.”

“Richard, will you come down there with me?”

“With you? Why are you going down there Josie? You’re a woman.”

“Papa’s down there and Richard. If James Bird were indeed unjustly executed perhaps I can do something to make it up to his family.”

“But it’s physically taxing, Josie. There are at least 100 wooden steps and the wind is blowing and it’s just started to rain. I can hear it on the tin roof in the entryway.”

She laughed. “I love to listen to rain falling on a tin roof. But I’m going with you, Richard. I’m not a delicate little rose petal that blows away in the slightest wind.”

He gulped. That’s exactly how he had pictured her in his need to protect her.

Josie didn’t need his protection on this trip. She slipped into her cloak and tied her bonnet before he could put on his own plaid jacket. She jumped into the wind like a swimmer jumping into Lake Erie on an 80 degree August day and she beat him down the one hundred steps to the foot of the lighthouse making her way down the steps like a surefooted mountain goat. He caught

up with her as she plowed through the sand to where her father and three other men were standing near the edge of the waves. A rolled up blanket lay at the feet of Josie's father.

"Papa, this is Captain Richard Butler, the keeper of the Erie Light." A short man with a black beard and long black hair put his arm around Josie. "I wondered where you had gotten to my dear." His voice was as deep as a bass drum.

Pierre Juneau had piercing black eyes and they didn't have friendly lights in them when he looked at Richard. "I've heard of you, of course, Captain Butler and the efficient job you are doing keeping the light. "

He turned his attention back to his daughter. "Josie, you need to go home and get out of this wind. It's really chill coming off the lake."

Richard knew that no matter what he said or did Pierre Juneau would not approve of him as his daughter's suitor, but that knowledge didn't diminish his love for her. He followed her with his eyes as she talked to her father and when he thought that her father wasn't looking, he walked over to Josie and handed her his gloves since she had forgotten hers. Richard noted that her father watched her slip on the gloves, but he didn't say anything.

Pierre Juneau spoke to his men and they gathered up the blanket and followed him up the one hundred stairs that led to the top of the hill and the lighthouse. "He turned around. "Josie, are you coming?"

"I'll be along Papa," she said. "You go on ahead."

Much to Richard's surprise, Josie's father went along, leaving her alone with him. Josie shivered. "Are you ready to go back up to the light house Richard?"

They climbed back up the steps together, in fact, she led the way. Richard held the door open for her and then hurried to poke up the cook stove and heating stove fires. He fixed a fresh pot of coffee and put a pan of stew on the stove to heat. Josie watched him. "You are efficient in the kitchen, Richard.

He dropped a fork as he set the table. "I must light the lamp, soon," he said.

"Then let me take over here," she said. She got up from her chair and continued setting the table. "Go light the lamp, Richard. I can manage here."

And she did. When he returned from lighting the lamp, she had set the table for supper and put it on the table. She had also made some cornmeal muffins.

He picked up one and bit into it to see if it were real. It was and it tasted delicious. "Where- how did you get these?"

"You had some cornmeal in your bin and the stove was hot so I stirred up some."

They sat down to supper.

Richard didn't feel like talking much. He was too busy enjoying the warmth of the stove and her cooking and her warmth. Her hand touched his as she poured him a second cup of coffee and he felt a thrill. He felt another thrill when he tasted the coffee. "What happened to the coffee? It got weaker."

"I hope you don't mind, Richard. I made a fresh pot."

"I don't mind, Josie. It's delicious."

They sat enjoying their supper and Richard felt they shared a companionable connection. He smiled at her.

She looked at him, and suddenly tears spilled down her cheeks. "I don't want to marry Count Dubois. I want to marry you."

"The warmth and happiness had nearly lulled him to sleep, but her words jolted him awake. "What?"

"Richard, I'm afraid I might have to marry Count Dubois. Papa likes him and he has given the Count permission to court me."

"Do you want him to court you, Josie?"

"No, Richard, I don't want him to court me. There is someone else I want very much to court me."

Richard's heart sank. "And who is that?"

She glared at him. "Richard, you are an intelligent man. I spent the entire afternoon courting him!"

Richard reached across the table and took her hand in his. "I love you, Josie."

She squeezed his hand. "I thought you would never court me back."

"Josie, I've loved you since the first time I saw you, but I haven't yet made my fortune. I may never make my fortune."

"I'll help you, Richard. After all, we found James Bird together, didn't we?"

"What is your father going to do about him?"

"Send him back to his family for burial."

"We should add some new verses to the song, Josie."

"Let's write them together, Richard."

Richard thought for a moment and then over his wildly beating heart said,

"The Count can't very well court you if you're married to someone else, can he?"

"I'd like to see him try it," she laughed. "Not even Papa would approve of that!"

"I could be married to you!"Josie stared at him, excitement in her amber eyes. We could run away together and get married and then the Count couldn't court me!" She brushed the tears from her cheeks. "Oh Richard, let's elope!"

Then she blushed and lowered her gaze. "That is, unless you don't want to marry me."

Richard took a quick gulp of coffee, a quick bite of cornmeal muffin and held out his hand. "Are you ready to elope? When can you be ready to elope? We can elope tonight. We can run away to New York and get married and come back and live in the lighthouse until I get my company started."

"I don't suppose we can live with Papa." Her laugh sounded like the tinkling of the piano that she played so well at the parties and balls they attended together.

"Why is it that your Papa is so opposed to me? I have good prospects. I am the light house keeper. I own the Celina and she is doing well hauling freight and grain. I plan to build two more ships and eventually run my own shipping company."

"Papa knows you have good prospects, Richard. It's just that you haven't quite earned your prospects yet and he wants me to marry someone who can give me a comfortable life immediately. Please come over and talk to him the first thing in the morning."

"Do you think he'll listen?"

"I can try to convince him to listen."

"Josie, I can't see you home. I have to stay here and tend the light."

"Richard, I can find my way home. I found my way here, didn't I?"

"I'll see you the first thing in the morning," Richard said.

Early the next morning, Richard sat down at Josie's kitchen table. He liked Josie's kitchen much better than he did the parlor with its carved divan from France and the two armchairs to match. He liked the cheerful red and white checked curtains at the windows and the matching tablecloth. He liked the potted geraniums in the window boxes and the smells coming from the iron cook stove. He liked the taste of Josie's steaming hot coffee and croissants.

Josie took Richard's coat and hung it on pegs beside the kitchen door. She put threw her arms around him and hugged him fiercely. "I thought I'd dreamed last night."

Richard kissed her. "I thought I dreamed it too. But here we are. I 'm ready to talk to your father. But I still don't have as much to offer you as Count Dubois."

"Richard, I want to be a partner with the man I love, not a possession."

"Life with me will not always be comfortable, Josie."

"Richard, I've kept house for Papa ever since Mama died five years ago. Papa felt that we didn't really need servants and I agreed. Mrs. Simpson comes in twice a week to help me when we have a party, but for the most part I do run the house and take care of me and Papa."

"Do you cook all of the time? Do you cook besides corn meal muffins?"

"When we have a party Mrs. Simpson helps me with the cooking, but I do the everyday cooking. Mama taught me how to cook before she died."

"Your parents must not have been born rich, Josie."

"Of course they weren't Richard. Papa worked his way up from the ground floor."

"That I most certainly did. " Pierre Juneau cast a long shadow across the wooden kitchen floor, even though Richard knew he was a short man. "One might even say that I worked my way up from the basement. I fled the Revolution in France and came to America with a family friend. After we embarked from our ship in Philadelphia he died, leaving me alone and friendless in America. I did not speak English well."

“Sit down, Papa, and have some coffee. You can continue your story sitting as well as standing.”

Richard pulled out a wooden kitchen chair, dusted it off, and held out his hand. “May I help you, Monsieur Juneau?”

“Don’t try to soften me up,” Pierre said. “It won’t work. Josie will marry Count Dubois next month.”

Richard’s heart sank, but he was determined to win over this stubborn old man for Josie’s sake. “Tell me the rest of your story, Sir.”

“I accept a job as a clerk in charge of a stock of merchandise in a French firm in Toronto. On the way there, my ship capsized in Lake Ontario. I recovered the goods and used them to open a store at Niagara, Canada, and form there I moved to Erie in 1805. In 1810 I entered into the salt business with some partners and for many years I operated a general mercantile business. From there I became the first cashier of the Erie Bank and one of its principal stockholders.

“You were ambitious and worked hard,” Richard said. “I intend to so the same thing for Josie and me.”

“Don’t be modest, Papa. You and Mama worked very hard. Now Papa has been appointed to the office of Canal Commissioner and Superintendent of Public Works at Erie. He has won many friends here.”

Richard smiled at him.“I have heard good things about you.”

Pierre did not smile back."Josie's mother died five years ago and she has proven herself to be a skillful cook and housekeeper. She has earned a life of comfort and Count Dubois will provide her with that kind of life."

Richard gulped coffee for courage. "But does he love her or does he regard her as another of his possessions?" Richard asked.

Pierre choked on his coffee. "Of what relevance is love?" he spluttered.

"Love is the most important thing in marriage," Richard said. "I love Josie."

"Papa, didn't you love Mama?" Josie cried, putting a pan of rolls in the oven.

Pierre glared at her. "Don't be impertinent, Josie. Of course I loved your mother, but that is not what made our marriage work. "

"What made your marriage work if not love, Papa?"

"Money and hard work. Your Mama worked hard right alongside me and she helped me make money."

"Why then do you expect me to marry Count Dubois for his money? I would prefer to marry Richard for love and work alongside him to make money."

Pierre laughed. "You have learned your lessons well, Josie. You have bested me in this argument."

"Then I will marry Richard, Papa."

"You will marry Count Dubois. You will learn to love him and his money, Josie."

"Papa, how can you degrade me so."

"I'm not degrading you, Josie. I am keeping my promise to the Count and giving you a good, comfortable life. He is an honorable man and will treat you well."

"But I don't love him, Papa."

Pierre turned and walked out of the room without replying. Josie stamped her foot in frustration. "He's so stubborn!" she cried.

"Show him you're just as stubborn," Richard said.

"I'll be at the party tonight. Will you leave with me?"

"I'll leave with you, Richard. We can slip away under the cover of the music and dancing."

And that's what they did. Josie pulled on a dark cloak and joined Richard who waited outside by her gate with a fast horse and buggy.

"Is the Celina is waiting below the lighthouse? Are we still traveling to Buffalo and getting married there?" Josie asked anxiously.

"We have to make a stop at the lighthouse first," Richard said.

Josie settled more comfortably in her seat. "I'll have to go shopping, Richard. I couldn't pack any of my clothes or Papa would have been suspicious."

Richard reached under the buggy seat and pulled out several valises. “Here are most of your clothes, Josie. The rest of them are at the lighthouse waiting for you, along with the preacher from the Methodist Church to marry us.”

She stared at him in amazement. “How did you get those? Reverend Jenkins is waiting for us?”

“Your Papa packed them for you and had them delivered to me. He gave us his permission to marry and blesses both of us. And he says that his love for your mother was the most important part of his success.”

“I think I out argued him,” Josie cried.

“You did,” Richard agreed. “Aren’t you happy or have you changed your mind about marrying me.”

“She snuggled closer to him. “I haven’t changed my mind Richard.”

She stared at the lighthouse. “Money and hard work at the lighthouse. We’re on our way.”

Fairport Harbor Light, Lake Erie

The town of Fairport Harbor on Lake Erie between Cleveland and Ashtabula served as a supply harbor for all ships heading to other ports on the Great Lakes. These ships carried cargo and pioneers and all of their possessions to lands beyond Ohio. Fairport Harbor also became a terminal on the Underground Railroad and the lighthouse a beacon of freedom to escaped slaves. The citizens of Fairport were staunch Abolitionists and the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 provoked them into more aggressive action. Anti-slavery captains, seamen, ordinary citizens, and lighthouse keepers cooperated to hide runaway slaves and smuggle them aboard Canada-bound ships. Lighthouse keepers frequently hid runaways in the cellar underneath the lighthouse.

This story happened in imagination.

Lake Erie Soul

All of the Great Lakes have a soul- Superior's vast and remote, Huron's connecting and mediating, Michigan's bustling and commercial, Ontario's international, and Erie's, well as far as Tom Jenkins was concerned, Lake Erie's soul symbolized freedom from all compass points.

Toby Jenkins had refused to be a slave as far back as he could remember into his childhood on the Centerville, Kentucky plantation of George Fontaine. Mr. Fontaine had bought his mother Janie at a slave auction in Louisville when she was a small child and brought her up

as a house servant. When Janie reached a certain age George Fontaine forced her to perform “the duties what a woman’s made for” and she became pregnant with Toby.

Toby well remembered their one room shack a few hundred yards from the main plantation house even though he tried hard to forget. Toby well remembered that George Fontaine had prevailed upon his mother for more “duties what a woman’s made for” and he had a brother named Tompkins and a sister named Mathilda. Tobey remembered certain smells like potlikker cooking and wool blankets drying by the fire and unwashed bodies in the winter time.

Tobey well remembered certain smells like wood shavings put him back in the carpentry shop on the plantation learning how to fashion wood into spoons and bowls and tables. Daddy Jack used to rap his knuckles with a wooden board whenever he made a mistake. But Toby quickly fell in love with wood. He loved to look at wood no matter what kind. He loved to smell the freshness of wood and he loved to feel its texture under his fingers from the rough tree bark to the fine furniture stage. By the time he was into his teens, Toby was an accomplished wood worker and his father George Fontaine had begun to hire him out to neighboring plantations to fashion furniture that fetched a high price for everyone but Toby. Certain smells like wood shavings, wood smoke and cornmeal mush brought back his childhood with the speed and fury of a Lake Erie storm. Toby preferred to face the storm instead of the memories.

Toby ran away for the first time in his thirteenth year and managed to reach the Ohio River before the bounty hunters that his father George Fontaine had hired captured him. He had tried to find someone to take him over the river in a boat, but the man with the rowboat that he finally found turned him over to the bounty hunters. It took months for his back to heal from the

overseer's flogging, but his heart and soul didn't heal. The flogging made him more determined than ever to find his freedom. Before he made his second and successful escape attempt when he had just turned fifteen, Toby had learned how to swim and how to row a boat. With Uncle Sampson's help, he had learned both skills on a pond in the woods behind the plantation. "You done learned your lessons, boy," Uncle Sampson told him after he had swum across the pond several times and rowed the skiff across it during a storm. What you practicing for?"

Toby grinned. What Uncle Sampson didn't know wouldn't get him a whipping. "I'm practicin' for nuthin," he said.

This time when Toby reached the Ohio River he relied on his own skills instead of someone else. He found a skiff tied up to a small wooden pier and poled it across the river. When he reached the opposite shore, he carefully tied up the skiff to a tree. He tore a scrap of cloth from his shirt and attached it to a tree branch that he planted firmly in the ground by the skiff. "There! Your owner came see where you are now," he said. Then he finally had time to get down on his hands and knees and kiss the freedom ground.

It took Toby several months and several hideaways to arrive at the shore of Lake Erie at a city named Erie in Pennsylvania. It took him one day to join the carpentry crew hurrying to build a ship called the Niagara for a man named Perry. Toby had no idea who Perry might be, but he did like working with wood again and the smooth feel of the wood under his fingertips. When Perry finally did appear in a grand uniform, he asked Toby if he wanted to join the Niagara crew as a soldier-carpenter. They finished the Niagara and guided her out onto Lake Erie, the lake with the free spirit and the captive storms and slowly voyaged to Put-in-Bay. Toby heard

snatches of talk about a British fleet, but he didn't pay much attention because he was too busy tending to the wooden masts and other crewing duties. A wooden ship had a lot of wood tending to do. Toby spent his days happily involved with his wood until Perry found the British fleet and the battle began. To Toby, the wooden ships were the casualties of battle.

"I wanted to mend the splintered wooden ships more than I wanted to fight the British," Toby would laugh when he told the story to his children years later. "I didn't care who splintered the wood or even who owned it, I just wanted to put it back together."

When he had finished with Perry's fleet, Toby took his ship's carpenter skills to Fairport Harbor where people used them so frequently and thoroughly that he opened his own shop within a year of his arrival. People came to Toby to buy for household goods, furniture, and to hire him to help build ships. Toby became known as Free Toby, the Free Black, and he earned and saved enough money to build himself a fine two story house with a white picket fence and to look around for a wife. He found Violet, a maid at the home of the Pritchards, one of the richest families in town. When Violet moved from the big white house on the hill to the fine two story house with its white picket fence near the lighthouse and the harbor, Toby joked that Violet married 70 feet up in the world , seventy feet being the height of the light house tower.

By the time a fierce Lake Erie storm ushered in 1850 in Fairport Harbor, Toby and Violet had acquired two children and a comfortable life. Toby also had kept a secret as old as his twelve year old daughter Daisy from his family. Light Keeper Isaac Ames was one of the reasons Toby lived near the light house because Isaac Ames and many of Fairport citizens were conductors on the Underground Railroad. Toby conducted too and he and Isaac Ames had such an effective

partnership that Fairport Harbor was one of the most active stations on the Underground Railroad. Toby estimated that at last count, Isaac had hidden at least 500 slaves in the light house cellar and helped load them aboard ships waiting to take them to Canada. Toby and other Fairport Harbor citizens would help fugitive slaves reach the lighthouse and at that point Isaac would take charge of them.

One early autumn day, Isaac Ames came to visit Toby who was sanding the hull of a boat in the backroom of his shop. "Toby, we have trouble," Isaac said, pushing his long, black hair off of his forehead.

Toby kept sanding his hull. "What trouble do we have, Mr. Ames?"

"Our trouble is the United States Congress. It has passed a new law that is going to make our work more difficult."

"How is that, Mr. Ames?"

"This new law is called the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 and it says that anyone who helps runaway slaves escape can be fined $1,000 and imprisoned and they commit a federal offense if they don't help recapture the fugitive. It also says that fugitive slaves can be recaptured in the North and returned to the South. It also pays a reward to those who capture fugitive slaves."

"How can a black person prove that they aren't a fugitive slave because they have no rights in court," Toby said.

"That's it exactly, Toby. The black man has no rights in a white man's court. Even free blacks and their freedom papers are in great danger."

"We need to keep a careful watch," Toby said.

"We need to keep the light house cellars open," Isaac said.

That night just as Tony was leaving his shop, there was a knock at the back door. Cautiously he opened the door and came face to face with a black man who looked strangely familiar to him, but he couldn't figure out where he had seen the man before. "May I help you with something, sir?"

The man's face shone with sweat even though the air outside the shop was cool. "Me and my family needs to get across that lake to Canada. They're chasing us."

"Who's chasing you?"

" Mr. George Fontaine's daughter Melanie and her husband Jax," the man said. Fontaine! Toby looked closely at the man. His eyes were shaped the same as Toby's and his hair lay in the same pattern.

"Are you from Centerville, Kentucky?" Toby asked the man.

The man looked frightened. "How did you know I'm from Centerville? Are you are slave catcher?"

Toby patted the man's hand. "Don't worry, I'm not a slave catcher. I help slaves escape."

"I have a wife and two children with me."

"Where are they?"

"They're in hidden in the cellar of a yellow house over yonder. The lady of the house told me to come and see Toby at the carpenter shop and he would take care of us. Are you Toby?"

"I'm Toby and I'm also your brother. Don't you remember me at all, Tomkins? Although you were pretty young when I ran away. But George Fontaine is your father, and Janie is your mother, isn't that right?"

"Law's a mercy, you're my brother Toby! Mama said she didn't know what happened to you. Should I shake your hand or hug you or what?"

"I think you should quick go collect your family and bring them here."

Tomkins hurried out the door and returned in five minutes with his wife and children. His wife had frightened blue eyes that matched her calico dress and his children, a boy about ten and a girl about eight, clung to their mother's skirts and pecked out at him like shy rabbits. "Darcy, I want you to meet my brother Toby. Kassie and Ollie, I want you to meet your Uncle Toby. He's going to help us get to Canada."

Darcy stared at Toby. "Brother! Tompkins, you didn't mention that this conductor on the railroad is your brother. "

"I didn't know it until I saw him and talked to him."

Darcy held out her hand to Toby. "I'm pleased to meet you, Toby, even when we're running on the railroad."

Toby solemnly shook her hand. “I’m please to meet you, Darcy. Then pulled her to him and hugged her. He ran over to Tomkins and hugged him. He felt tears running down his cheeks. “I never thought I’d see you again, much less with a wife and children.”

“We got some catching up to do,” Tompkins said.

“We’d better not do it now. We’ve got to hide you. The slave catchers can’t be far behind you and there’s always somebody out for the reward.”

“Where you gonna hide us, Toby? Here in your shop?”

“No, we’ve got a better spot. We’ll wait until it gets dark and then I’ll show you.”

While they waited for sunset they caught up on family talk and Toby gave his niece and nephew some sugar cakes that Violet had sent to his shop with him. “I’ll bring Violet to the light house so she can meet you.”

“Why can’t you go get her now and bring her here now?” Ollie wanted to know.

“Because even though I’m a free black, it’s better for me not to be on the street too much nowadays.”

“Free black? Have you got your papers tied around your neck?” Tomkins asked his brother.

“I don’t have no papers.”

“Then, how can you be a free black?”

"I freed myself when I ran away from Kentucky all those years ago. I served in Perry's army and I built me a good business. I bought a house and I make good money. I have earned the right to be a free black."

"But George Fontaine didn't give you no papers when he was alive. You didn't buy your freedom from him."

"I found my freedom and claimed it. I didn't need to ask George Fontaine for it."

"I know, Toby, but tell that to the slave catchers. Explain that to the federal marshal when he arrests you and sends you back into slavery."

"I'm respected in this town. No one's going to turn me in or arrest me," Toby said.

"I hope you're right, Toby. But there are folks in every town who love money more than friendship or anything else."

"I'll show you what I mean," Toby said, his pride smarting from the idea that anyone in Abolitionist Fairport would turn him in to a slave catcher. "I'll go get my wife Violet and my children Daisy and Darius and bring them down here to meet you. Then we'll go to the lighthouse and hide you out."

"Don't do it Toby. It's too dangerous," Tomkins said.

Toby closed the door behind him and hurried up the street to his house on the hill. He opened the gate to his picket fence and hurried up the porch steps. "Violet!" he shouted. "Violet":

She threw open the front door. “What is it, Toby?”

“Get the kids and come down to the shop with me. I’ve got something to prove to my brother Tompkins.”

He smiled at the astonished look on her face. “Your brother!”

“I’ll tell you on the way down to the shop. Take off your apron, throw on your shawl, and come on. “Kids, come on, we’re going down to the shop for awhile.”

He managed to herd them down the hill to his shop as quick as a storm could blow up on Lake Erie. He threw open the shop door. “Here they are, Tompkins. Here is my wife Violet and my children Daisy and Darius.”

Toby happily watched the family reunion and took part in it himself. He was showing Tompkins his latest schooner that he had just finished rigging when he heard a knock at the door, such a quiet knock that if he hadn’t heard it some many times the noisy happiness in the room might have buried it. Isaac Ames stood at the door and Toby drew him into the room.”My brother and his wife and children are the passengers that need to be hidden in the lighthouse tonight,” Toby said quietly.

“There’s a problem,” Isaac said. There is a group of slave catchers and bounty hunters in town and they are patrolling the waterfront watching for fugitive slaves that might be escaping in ships.”

“Can we still get them to the lighthouse?” Toby asked.

“If we use the basement passage and go quickly.”

"I'll send my family home right away."

Isaac stared at Toby. Toby had never seen him look so sad and resigned. "You'd better bring your family to the lighthouse, too, Toby."

"What do you mean? I am well respected in this town. I served with Commodore Perry. Who would betray me?"

"Someone who believes that black people are not people at all. Someone who is jealous of your talent at shipbuilding. Someone who loves money and needs it."

"Solomon Haynes!" Toby had known for years that old Solomon Haynes didn't like him and in fact, always spat tobacco juice at him when they ran into each other on the street. But Toby hadn't taken Solomon too seriously, because he had been too busy and too happy and so many people came to his shop. He had friends in Fairport Harbor. "What can he do to me?" Toby demanded.

"He's already done it," Isaac Ames said. "Sometimes it just takes one person to undo the good work of countless others. Solomon talked to the bounty hunters today and they are preparing to storm your shop and demand to see your Freedom Papers. We both know that you have none."

"I thought my years of service and labor in this country were my freedom papers!"

"You are correct, Toby, they are, but right now Congress doesn't see things your way and we need to get you and your family to safety."

"Does Solomon know about the secret room in the light house cellar?"

"He might suspect, but I don't think he knows for sure. You and the others will be safe there for a short time while we make arrangements to ship you to safety."

Toby whispered to Tompkins and Darcy and Violet and the adults rounded up the children and handed them their jackets to wear against the September evening. They walked single file down a path through the woods in the back of Toby's shop and then climbed up at least fifty wooden steps. Toby saw that the light house lamp had already been lit and shone over the waters of Lake Erie. In his imagination he saw the beacon lighting the way to Canada, even though he knew that the beacon could not reach the entire distance across the lake.

They reached the light house safely and Isaac Ames led them to the secret room in the basement. "Is your schooner finished?" Isaac whispered to Toby.

"My schooner is finished."

"I will send some couriers to launch it into the Grand River and sail it to the lighthouse. Then you and your family can board it and sail it to Canada."

"That's a right risky venture in September on Lake Erie," Toby objected. "I still believe we will be safe in Fairport Harbor."

"I'm hope you do not receive a practical lesson in how unsafe you are," Isaac told Toby as he hurried away. Toby heard him bolt the door behind him. Toby's mind still could not believe that someone from Fairport Harbor had actually betrayed him and that he and his family and his brother and his family were locked in the safe room in the light house cellar.

He felt a hand on his shoulder. Violet was shaking him. “Toby, we need your help.”

Toby helped settle the children on the pallets on the floor and cover them with blankets. Then he and Violet and Tomkins and Darcy sat in a circle with an oil lamp burning in the center and talked over their situation. What would they do if they made it to Canada? Would it possible to start new lives there? And why, oh why, did they have to leave a town that he loved so much, Toby agonized.

The lamp had burned low and Toby must have fallen asleep when the noise outside startled him awake. Even through the thick walls he could hear the muffled voices and shuffling and stomping of many feet. What was happening? Had all of his neighbors betrayed them to the slave catchers? Were they all going to be sent back into slavery in Kentucky? He clenched his fists. He never had carried a gun not even when he served with Commodore Perry, but what now he would have given his freedom for a gun!

He heard feet stomping overhead and shouts. The children huddled on their pallets in terror and pulled the blankets over their heads. Violet and Darcy stood in the corner hugging each other. Toby and Tompkins waited and watched by the door. Tompkins leaned against it listening he was so anxious to discover what was going on outside it.

The door opened so suddenly that Tompkins fell forward on his face. Isaac Ames helped him to his feet. “I hope you didn’t get hurt, Tompkins.”

“I didn’t get hurt.”

Toby stared at Isaac Ames. “You’re bleeding Mr. Ames.”

Isaac Ames dabbed at a cut on his arm with his coat sleeve. “I had a trifling argument with a slave catcher, but I got the better of him. He’s lying in Solomon Hayne’s parlor wondering what happened to him.”

“What happened, Mr. Ames?”

“We’ve managed to drive off the slave catchers, but they promised to return with the federal marshal who under law has to arrest you and hand you over to them. We also managed to launch your schooner into the river and bring it to the foot of the lighthouse. We will hold off any of Solomon’s men until you are able to board it and get out into the lake. But you must hurry, Toby!”

“I don’t want to leave. This is my home. It tears out my heart and my life to leave.”

“If you stay you will be returned to slavery.”

“What about my shop and my friends and the children’s school and Violet’s sewing circle?”

“You will survive all of them. Come, we have to move quickly!”

Isaac Ames led them through a dark tunnel that Toby hadn’t known about and out onto the beach. The schooner had had finished just that afternoon lay moored about fifty yards from the beach, tossing and turning in the waves. “Quickly!” Isaac Ames urged them. “I hear the signal that means our enemies are getting closer. He lifted the children and put them into one of the skiffs that were tied to the lighthouse pier. Darcy and Tompkins quickly got into another skiff. Two of Toby’s friends rowed the skiffs out to the schooner and helped everyone aboard.

"Go now, Toby!" Isaac Ames pushed him toward the remaining skiff. "You and Violet can make a new life for yourself in Canada."

"I can't go, Mr. Ames. This is home."

"Violet, reason with him. There isn't much time."

"Toby, I'll no longer be your wife if you don't come with me. I don't want a slave for a husband!"

"This is our home, Violet. We have people here who love us."

Violet pointed scornfully to the lights that now were winking like fireflies on the cliff above them. "They sure do love us. That's why they want to hunt us down and sell us down the river. I'm going to claim my freedom." She climbed into the skiff.

Isaac Ames drew himself to his full height and stroked his black beard."Toby, time is short. You need to get in the skiff with Violet ."

"You are my friend, Isaac Ames."

"You have a case of misplaced loyalty, Toby. She is your wife and your children and your nieces and nephews and brother and sister in law are waiting for you aboard the schooner."

"It's hard to leave a lifetime's work."

"You will buy yourself time for another lifetime's work if you escape. Go before it's too late, you stubborn nigger!"

The word hit Toby like a slap in the face, like a musket ball between the eyes and he jumped into the skiff without taking time to note the tears in the eyes of Isaac Ames.

The wind was strong enough so they didn't have to use oars to row the skiff far enough out to discourage pursuit. Some of the slave catchers were determined enough to use their own skiffs to chase the schooner, but Toby's workmanship was strong and his rigging and sails sturdy enough to rapidly fill with the wind and propel the schooner fast enough to outrace any pursuers.

Violet came up to him as he stood at the wheel and put her arms around him. "Let's call this ship the Liberty."

"That is a good name for her," Tony said, not taking his eyes from the beacon of the Fairport Light House as it shone out over the lake. He watched it for some twenty miles until it disappeared over the horizon. The sky suddenly turned desolately black and the wind whipped the waves into swords that attempted to piece the sides of the Liberty.

Toby watched the horizon until he saw it. Another light house beacon, this time shining from the Canadian shore, guiding him and his family to the bright promise of a new life.

Lake Michigan

Waugoshance Light-Lake Michigan

On April 19, 1871, James Davenport, accepted the position of assistant keeper at Waugoshance Lighthouse at the western entrance to the Straits of Mackinac in Lake Michigan. He had only been the light keeper for about six months when the Great Chicago Fire broke out in October of 1871. The winds blew the smoke from the fire onto Lake Michigan and the smoke caused a severe fog. The fog encased several ships, putting them in peril. Maritime legend has it that Captain Davenport had to stay awake all night to keep the foghorn operating, so he surrounded himself with pots and pans that would trigger a clattering alarm if he fell asleep while tending the fog horn.

This story happened in imagination.

Fire and Fog

October 1871

Fog as thick as the distance between light keeper Robert Downs and his wife Melinda blanketed the lighthouse like a shroud. He coughed as its acrid bite traveled from his nose to his lungs. Waugoshance Light Station stood at the end of a narrow strip of land called Waugoshance Point which marked the turning point for ships traveling through the Straits of Mackinac and along the eastern shore of Lake Michigan between the Beavers and the mainland. Using the point

as a lethal home base, eight miles of islands, treacherous shoals and islets extended into Lake Michigan that covered them to only a depth of twelve or less feet at this point.

Robert paced the empty tower room, his dark blue wool trousers and jacket hanging on his six foot frame. The sable brown hairs on his head and crisp moustache and the silt brown of his eyes contrasted sharply with his milk pale complexion. “The perfect place to navigate a marriage full of shoals and islets and fog,” Robert addressed the empty tower room. “The isolation is why I brought her here.” As if his voice had summoned her, he heard Melinda’s footsteps coming up the cast iron stairway to the tower.

She sailed into the room. An apt nautical metaphor, he thought to himself with approval. Her figure and her dress reminded him of a tall, lean, main mast with the sails fastened securely. It was the potential of her black hair hanging loosely to her shoulders that excited him and gave him hope for the future, their future together.

The coolness of her blue eyes drowned that hope. His attempt at a smile ended halfway. “I hope your heart isn’t as heavy as your footsteps or this smoke.”

“There’s a terrible fire in Chicago,” she panted. “One of the ship’s captains told me to let you know. He narrowly missed Arrow Shoal.”

“It’s a good thing we didn’t stay in Chicago,” he said.

“I wanted to stay in Chicago for Seth’s sake. It’s civilized and far enough away from Seattle to keep him safe.”

"Safe?" Safe from what?" Robert looked past his wife at the swirling dark clouds of smoke. They were sliding into the same, well traveled argument that always ended up in a draw.

"Melinda, you knew when you married me that I wasn't a city person."

"You weren't a country person, either. You were a sailor on the lakes. You promised me you'd stop sailing and settle on the land."

"We are living on a point of land in a lighthouse, Melinda."

"We don't have any neighbors and it's twenty miles to town, Robert."

"It's land, Melinda. You have me firmly anchored to land. You already had me firmly anchored when we got married."

"We made an agreement, Robert. I didn't force you to marry me.

"You didn't? What about Seth?"

"What about him? I wanted to take care of him by myself. You're the one who followed me to Ohio and begged me to come back. I was living well and taking good care of him."

"That's true, Melinda, but Seth is partially my responsibility too."

He watched her stiffen her spine as hard as the wooden pier that jutted out into Lake Michigan. But, he reminded himself, the constant irritation of the water softened the wood and gradually eroded it into splinters. Maybe the isolation of this place would do that to her resistance. Maybe the isolation of this place would soften her women free ideas.

"Robert, when I found out that Seth was coming, I decided that I would bear him and take care of him myself. I hadn't intended to marry and I hadn't intended to change my mind. I listened to your argument that Seth needed the influence of a father in his life, an influence other than my father.

Robert smiled. "I'm glad I'm an influence other than your father and I'm glad I came after you."

Melinda didn't smile back at him. Instead, she stretched taller revealing the outlines of her body under her straight lined blouse and trousers. Ever since he had known her, Melinda had occasionally worn the newfangled outfits with skirt- trousers, unlike most other women. Now that they lived in the light house, Melinda wore the skirt- trousers all of the time. The light had yet to soften her ideas. Watching her, Robert thought about the magical night aboard the Betty Jo when Melinda had stayed with him all night and they hadn't argued. At first he had been astonished at her honesty. She didn't want any commitments, she'd told him. If they spent the night together that would be the extent of their commitment. They wouldn't see each other again. She hadn't even told him about Seth. He had harried that secret out of her mother during the hurried trip to Seattle.

Her glance blazed blue fire. "Why did you come after me?"

"Melinda, I've told you at least ten times, I came after you because I love you and Seth."

"You love me because you want to own me. To me love is captivity. And how could you love Seth before you even knew him or knew about him?"

"I love him because he's my son and your son. "

"You love him because you want to own him."

"He's my flesh and blood, part of my family."

"He has his own flesh and blood. He is his own person."

"He's part of both of us. Why do you deny that?

"He will be his own person, Robert. He'll stand tall, resolute, independent like this lighthouse. I'll see to that."

So much for softening of ideas, he thought."Even the light house needs help once in a while," Robert said gently. He wanted to fight his way through the thick smoke of misunderstanding and fear and mistrust that swirled between them. He wanted to put his arm around her waist, draw her close to him, and kiss her, but he couldn't. The smoke enveloped them both and he knew that if he materialized as a solid object in its midst, she would scream in fright and flee down the stairs.

Instead, he rang the fog bell that warned ships to stay away from the shoals surrounding the lighthouse. Its brass voice sounded loud enough to reach Chicago. He imagined its echoes riding the tendrils of smoke back to their source. He sighed. If only he could send buckets of water on the smoke trails to help fight the fire both here and in Chicago.

"It is beautiful here, Robert." Melinda had walked to the edge of the tower and was leaning against the railing trying to see through the smoke.

"How can you see the beauty when the smoke covers it?" he asked her.

"I know what the beauty looks like. I see it every day with Seth. We watch the sea gulls performing air current ballets above the rocks. We watch the sky change from white cloud sailboats to black thunder cloud pirate galleons. We collect shells on the beach and carry them inside to bring in the sound of the waves. We listen to the rhythm of the waves on the shore and breathe in time. We fasten our lives to a wave beaten rock and count the beats. We collect shells on the beach and arrange them in the garden. We sit on the beach and explore the endless horizon."

Robert smiled. "Each of the Great Lakes has a soul. Lake Superior is wild and remote like a wolf stalking the edges of the world. Lake Erie is like a peregrine falcon, preferring to be wild but adapting to existing on the edges of tall buildings. Lake Ontario is like a chameleon, mixing the genes of the four great lakes that empty into it and reflecting their personalities. Lake Huron is an octopus with huge arms like Georgian Bay and geologists say Lake Michigan, extending its range. And Lake Michigan. Lake Michigan is a faithful pet dog, surrounded by humans, but with the lurking potential of the bite."

Melinda stared at him. "I didn't know you had any of the poet in you, Robert. That is an extraordinary way of describing the great lakes."

"I didn't just sail the lakes, Melinda. I studied and learned and absorbed them. I want to domesticate them, but I know I can't. No one can."

"Maybe that's the most important lesson to learn about the lakes Robert. They are familiar because they are so vastly and eternally there. We take them for granted and think they

are domesticated, but it takes just one storm or sunset to show us that they can't, they won't be tamed."

"Fire can't be tamed either, Melinda, but we need to keep ringing the bell so people can confront the fire and fight it. The smoke is so thick that ships captains can't see through it and I'm afraid that some of them might sink or run aground on the rocks."

She smiled at him. "The bite of the domesticated dog, Robert?"

He smiled back. "Something like that."

Their blue and brown eyes held and he felt like an empty Lake Ontario ship hold, eager to be filled with whatever bounty she offered.

She stiffened. "Did you hear that, Robert?"

"A ship's whistle. I'll have to keep ringing the bell to warn them away."

Without looking at him, she turned away."Ring away then." Without looking at her, he heard her footsteps descending the stairs. He sighed again and continued to ring the bell.

He rang the bell for what seemed like hours before he finally got up from the chair and stretched. He walked to the edge of the tower railing to check on the condition of the smoke. It had thickened to the extent that he felt like he could grab handfuls of it and stuff it like cotton into a pillow. He heard the frantic searching of a ship's whistle for directions through the smoke and hurried back to his chair. After ringing the fog bell vigorously for several minutes, he no longer heard the frantic ship's whistle. He sighed with relief. One vessel had escaped the rocks, but the next had to be warned away. He pulled the rope harder, but now it seemed to pull back

with strength that overpowered his own. The smoke had darkened the room, or perhaps it was night. He didn't dare drop the rope to go to the window and scan the sky. He sat in the chair gripping the bell rope in his fingers like sea weed from the bottom of the lake. He shook his head. The lake water must be muffling the sound of the bell because now it sounded like he was sitting deep under water ringing it. He felt his chin hit his chest. He jerked awake. No! He couldn't fall asleep. A nap from him could wreck a ship!

Robert rang the bell a few more times before he felt his head dropping to his chest again. He slapped himself across the face and his heavy gold wedding ring caught him painfully in the corner of his left eye. "Ouch!" he hollered, he hoped quietly.

He had not hollered quietly enough for soon he heard footsteps on the stairs. They were lighter and swifter than Melinda's. Seth's tousled blond head appeared at the top of the stairs. "Papa, Mama says it's time to eat supper."

"Tell her I have to keep ringing the bell, Seth."

"I can ring the bell while you're eating, Papa."

"Then when will you eat, Seth?"

"Mama will ring the bell while I'm eating."

"Then when will she eat?"

"You can ring the bell while she's eating, Papa."

"We can't ring in circles forever, Seth. We need to sleep."

"Mama is bringing up some tools to keep us awake," Seth told him.

"What tools, Seth?"

"These tools!" Seth hoisted the rest of his body up the tower stairs and Robert saw that he waved a copper sauce pan in each hand.

"What are you doing with your Mama's pans? You better put them back before she misses them," Robert told his son.

"She told me to take them, Papa."

"Are you sure she told you to take them, Seth? Your Mama doesn't readily share her tools."

"She told me to take them, Papa. Don't you believe me?"

Robert patted his small son's head. "You may have misunderstood what she told you, Seth."

"She told me to take them, Papa! She did!" Seth flung both pans down in front of his father's chair.

"Mama works by herself, Seth."

"Mama said that two partners working together are better than one.

Seth bent over and retrieved his pans. "Mama's bringing more pans to help keep us awake. She said we can bang them whenever any of us are about to fall asleep."

Robert stopped ringing the bell. “She said all of that? Are you sure, Seth?”

The smell of the roast chicken and the clatter of the pans she was carrying arrived at the top of the stairs a few seconds before he heard Melinda’s soft voice. “She did say all of that, Robert.”

Sand Point Light House, Lake Michigan, Escanaba, Michigan

On December 19, 1867, John Terry assumed his duties as the first keeper of the new Sand Point Light near Escanaba, Michigan, but he didn't enjoy his new job for long. In April 1868, he died and the U.S. government appointed his wife Mary as keeper of the light.

This story happened in imagination.

March 1866-1886

Imperfect Child

"I think Evan needs to find a wife," Rachel said to her husband Scott as she polished the lamps in readiness for the evening in the Sand Point Lighthouse."He can construct his marriage along with the construction of the lighthouse tower."

The nearly completed lighthouse stood at the water's edge in Ludington Park and was being built to warn mariners away from Sand Point and the sand reef that reached out into little Bay De Noc. The keeper's dwelling was 1 ½ story brick painted white and government plans called for an attached brick tower to be topped by a cast iron lantern room which would house a

fourth order Fresnel lens. The light was a fixed red signal.

Scott didn't look up from the Escanaba Iron Port he was reading. "What makes you say that?" he asked after enough time had passed for the light to flash at least ten times.

"He likes home cooking and home comforts. You can tell that by the amount of time he spends with us here in our quarters. And he's a kind and patient man. You can tell that by the way he tends the light. Why he even trims the wicks on the lamps with extra care."

"He's a good assistant keeper," Scott agreed.

"He's coming back from his leave a day early to replenish the kerosene supply and he also got a special polish for the lenses from the Lighthouse Supply Depot in Detroit."

"He's a good assistant keeper." Scott threw down the newspaper and picked up his gun. "Speaking of polishing, I want to go birding tomorrow so I'd better make sure this is in good working order."

"Tomorrow? But the district superintendent is coming on Friday to inspect us. Don't you think you should stay here and help us get ready?"

"Why should I have to do that. You and Evan keep the place looking inspection ready. Besides, I'd rather go birding or hunting, you know that."

"I know that," Rachel said quietly. For months now she and Evan had just as quietly done most of the work of operating and maintaining the Sand Point Light. Scott's consumption sometimes made it difficult for him to breathe much less do anything in the lighthouse. Slowly, carefully, methodically, she had learned the tasks of lighthouse maintenance from Evan and as

she performed the duties, often by herself, she began to think of the lighthouse as hers. It belonged to her even more than it did to the United States government. After all, it was she and Evan who keep the lens clear and operating and the lamps polished and filled with oil. She and Evan worked to get everything ready for government inspection while Scott coughed in his bed or went hunting. She loved Scott and her heart thudded when he coughed so hard that he couldn't breathe, but the lighthouse had become the child that he could not give her and she knew she had to care for it and protect it with her every healthy breath.

Rachel sighed. When District Superintendent Myers had inspected them a few months ago Scott had smilingly accepted his compliments while she and Evan stood aside as part of the woodwork she had just polished a few minutes before he arrived.

"I saw some rabbits over in the north pasture."

"Friday is only two days away, Scott."

He bent over the gun. "You and Evan can handle it. I'd like rabbit stew for dinner."

Once again, Rachel and Evan handled it and stood aside and smiled while Scott accepted the congratulations from District Superintendent Meyer. But this time Rachel didn't give the woodwork a last minute polish. This time, she fingered the woodwork thoughtfully. She felt a sharp jab as a piece of the old wood stabbed her finger. Thoughtfully she put her finger in her mouth and sucked at the splinter. Rachel had a plan for the next inspection which the District Superintendent had scheduled for the following spring.

This inspection Scott's consumption sided with her and he coughed through parts of the

inspection. This time Rachel used her healthy lungs to talk to Superintendent Myers about the placement of the lighthouse tower.

"The lighthouse is accessible by land so it is logical to attach the tower to the back side of the keeper's house, and not place it on the water side. Then you can have the front door enter through the base of the tower and make it more convenient for the keeper," Rachel argued.

"That will also make it more convenient for me," she thought to herself.

The district superintendent argued back, but not as forcibly as the slender woman with dark brown hair, blue eyes, and a plaid shawl around her shoulders. She paced back and forth stirring the skirts of her plain brown dress into ripples to match the waves on the water outside. She twirled on the toes of her brown laced shoes as she pointed at the light to make her point. An intensity coming from deep within her soul ignited the tinder of her arguments and the blaze swept everything before it. District superintendent Myers gave in and instructed the contractor to place the tower the way Rachel wanted it, even though that placement did not match any other lighthouse towers in the district.

"I'll explain it to everyone," Rachel said and she did, beginning with her husband Scott, the official light keeper. "I have to do most of the physical work, including the climbing and lighting, so it's only fair that the layout is convenient for me," she said.

The mismatched placement also helped conceal her visits to the mainland which had become more and more frequent within the last year. Finally Scott confronted her about the visits, right in front of Evan. "You don't have to go to the mainland so often," he said one morning as the three of them sat at the wooden kitchen table eating oatmeal and toast.

Her anger boiled up within her hotter than the stove flame. Her anger froze her heart colder than a January Lake Michigan blizzard. “I do have to go to the mainland so often. In fact, I need to go more often,” she said.

“I told you how I feel about this,” Scott said. He got up from the table. “Evan and I need to do some boat repair.”

“I’m going to the mainland.” She turned back to the stove.

“You need to tidy and polish in the oil room.”

“I’ll do that when I get back.”

“You need to do that first, Rachel.”

Rachel whirled around from the stove. The wooden spoon she was using fell from her hands and fell with a clatter on the floor. She didn’t notice. She untied her apron and flung it at Scott. Then put both hands on her hips.

“I know what I need to do first Scott and I will do it.” Grabbing her sunbonnet from the peg by the door, she marched out of the room.

The trip to Eva’s house didn’t seem as long as usual. It usually went in stages. First she had to thread her way carefully through the swamp, next the woods, and then a succession of meadows before she reached the first town street. The landscape blurred together on this trip and she stood pulling at the knocker on the front door in what seemed like the slap of a wave against the boat.

Eva answered the door hiding her surprise, hugged Rachel warmly. “Colin’s taking his nap right now, but let’s have a cup of tea. He should be awake by then. As they were sipping the tea and eating chocolate cookies, Rachel heard Colin’s whimpers from the bedroom. Quickly she set down the tea cup and ran to take him out of his crib. “Mmmmmaama,” he said.

Rachel knew that he was six years old and blind and that the doctors had told her that he would never be able to see. Rachel knew that Scott had insisted that Colin stay on the mainland with Eva because “a lighthouse is no place for a defective child.” Rachel knew that she wanted to bring Colin home, to her home in the lighthouse but she afraid of what the clumsy fingers of a blind six year old would do. Rachel knew that she loved Colin beyond any love she had felt for anyone, even more than she loved the gulls and the endless horizons and expanse of the lake. Rachel knew that soon she would do something about Colin.

But for now, for today, she did the same thing she did every time she visited Colin. She spent hours playing with him and feeding him and then just before dusk she went home to the lighthouse. After each visit Scott grew more tightlipped and kept piling more of the lighthouse duties on her shoulders to keep her anchored there. But her love for Colin gave her energy. She managed to mother him during the day and mother the light house at night. As her time at the light house piled up like ice towers on winter Lake Michigan, the light house became her second child, not as important as Colin, the child that she created and cherished and knitted in the womb of her deepest soul and cherished and birthed for far more than nine months, but important enough to cherish .

When Scott died from his consumption a year later, she sobbed as she watched the sexton

shovel earth over his grave in the Episcopal Church Cemetery in Escanaba. She had buried him in his red plaid shirt, with a wooden carving of the lighthouse tucked in the blanket that covered his feet. She had insisted on the blanket because he had always complained about his feet being cold when he sat in the rocker in the sitting room of the lighthouse. She didn't want Scott to have cold feet throughout eternity.

As they left the cemetery, Scott's Aunt Kate had hugged Rachel and with tears in her eyes said, "Oh Rachel, how unfortunate that you did not have children. It would have been well to have had his children to comfort you."

Rachel looked at her with clear, dry eyes. "He did leave me a child. My son's name is Colin."

"I mean a normal child."

"Colin is a normal child and he is coming home."

"How will you care for Colin? Scott couldn't have left you much money."

"He left me the lighthouse. The district superintendent has recommended me as keeper."

She had asked the district superintendent to allow Evan to remain as assistant keeper, wanting to allow things to go on as usual at the light house. She made arrangements with Eva to bring Colin home in two days.

The next day, Evan decided to turn her original marriage plan for him on her instead of a woman that she chose for him.

"I know it would make more practical sense for us to be married, Evan, but I can't marry you. I have responsibilities."

"I'll be your partner in the lighthouse for the rest of our lives. I'll love you for the rest of our lives, Rachel."

"It's not that simple, Evan."

He put his arms around her. What is it, Rachel? Don't you care for me at all?"

She knew she couldn't answer that because she'd have to tell him the truth. "I have other loyalties, Evan. Scott and I had a son. His name is Colin and he was born blind."

She thought that Evan would be shocked beyond speech to discover that she and Scott had a son. His brown eyes shone with compassion, not shock. "I know, Rachel."

"How do you know?"

"Scott told me about Colin."

"When did he tell you and why did he tell you?"

"He said that you had a blind son and that you wouldn't do the best thing for both of you and leave him on the mainland. He said he didn't want to have anything to do with Colin. "

"How could he say those things? Colin is our child."

"He considered Colin your child and your problem. I don't feel that way, Rachel. As far as I'm concerned, Colin comes with the light house."

She didn't, couldn't believe him at first. She told him so, told him to keep his distance and he did. From this distance he helped her move Colin into the small room off the kitchen. Evan helped her teach Colin the number of steps it took to get from his room to the kitchen and back. They had taught Colin to heat the tea kettle and pour a cup of tea. Evan tried to get closer by showing her is love for Colin and by helping him. He was frustrated when she still kept her distance. She knew how he felt, but she pushed it out of the world of her light and light house. She willed him to stay comfortably out of the range of the light in the soothing darkness of indecision and status quo As the months slipped by, she felt that she and Evan were in a partnership-parentship nurturing the lighthouse and allowing it to grow and become an important part of protecting sailors and cargo from the Sand Point reef. Her will covered his until the Claremont wrecked on Sandy Point Reef in a November storm.

Bound for Escanaba from Detroit, the Claremont carried a load of groceries and dry goods for the men in the lumber camps near Escanaba. As Captain Truman later told the story, the Claremont ran into a storm outside of Bay de Noc. The wind soon reached gale force and Captain Truman ordered his crew to take in the main sail and let the Claremont struggle along using her fore sail and stay sail, since the wind had blown away the jib. They sighted the Sand Point Light through the curtain of heavy snow and were making for shore when suddenly the wind slammed the Claremont into the Reef. She filled with water so fast that the pump didn't help and soon she broached to and rolled over. The mate stood at the wheel with one man beside him.

They jumped for the windward rail as they saw her going over and the captain and another crewman were thrown into the water. All of the men climbed into the main rigging as

quickly as they could. The men shivered with cold and despair as they faced the raging sea, the darkness, and the blinding snow. Huge waves dashed continuously over them and they were all certain that they would never see their home for friends again. The Claremont drifted into the harbor, about 300 feet away from the lighthouse. The men in the rigging saw dot of light on the breakwater as if people were carrying lanterns to spot them.

Captain Truman usually looked at Rachel and smiled at this point in his story. “Then, I saw more lights, only these lights were much closer than the ones on the breakwater. The close up lights came from lanterns in the Mackinaw boat that Rachel and Evan rowed out from the lighthouse. They saved our lives, every last one of us.”

Rachel usually smiled back at Captain Truman at this point in his story, and said, “We just did our jobs.” But her smile hid the sadness and reality of that night.

The details of that night were etched as starkly in her mind as the waves marked Lake Michigan stones or carved out Lake Michigan cliffs. She and Evan, just the two of them in the Mackinaw boat hauled Captain Truman and his three crew members aboard and rowed them safely back to the Sand Point Light house.

She and Evan pulled each man out of the boat and through the front door that entered the light house through the base of the tower. She handed Evan clean dry clothes for the men and firmly closed the bedroom door behind her for the sake of their modesty and her own. While Evan took care of the clothes, she hurried to the black cook stove in the kitchen and made gallons of warm coffee and reheated the chicken noodle soup she had made for supper. It took Captain Truman five minutes to dress and two minutes to gulp down two cups of hot coffee. He

told them his story between spoonfuls of chicken noodle soup.

Colin brought Captain Truman a second cup of coffee, pouring it the way that Evan had taught him. Colin smiled so proudly that Rachel felt tears in her eyes.

. Evan told her his story with his eyes from that night on. There was so much harmony between them that he didn't need to do anything but glance at her and she knew what he was thinking and feeling. She thought and felt the same things. Using Captain Truman and his crew and Colin as a shield, she managed to dodge Evan for two more weeks. Then a ship from Captain Truman's company in Detroit picked up the stranded men and she and Evan were alone again.

Rachel stood next to Evan at the window and watched the rescue ship pull away from the light house. 'Come back,' she wanted to shout after it, but she didn't. She watched the ship disappear over the horizon, and then she sat in Scott's chair and picked up the Escanaba Iron Port. She stared down at it, her thoughts whirling around like a Lake Michigan seiche. The words gradually took shape and they were about her. The newspaper reporter had interviewed Captain Truman about the rescue of the Claremont and he reported each man's gratitude for being rescued. The reporter had even gotten hold of the district superintendent and quoted him as saying that Rachel was a very methodical woman, very careful in the discharge of her duties, and very particular in the care of the property under her charge."

Tears blurred Rachel's eyes and she was so busy trying to stifle her emotions that she didn't hear Evan come up behind her and put his hands on her shoulders.

He swung her around, rocking chair and all. "We're good partners, Rachel. Why don't

you marry me?"

She didn't like to think about how brown his eyes were and how much they reminded her of the soft, warm browns in her parlor and how much they spelled home. She didn't like to think about how much she wanted to smooth down the brown locks of his hair away from his forehead and stroke away the worried lines there with her fingers. She swallowed. "There are at least three women in Escanaba who want to marry you Evan. They still come calling on you."

"They're not you," he said. "They'll never be you."

"I can't marry you, Evan. "

"You feel the same way about me as I feel about you. Isn't that a good reason for marriage?"

"Not always, Evan. Sometimes other things are more important than love."

"What things, Rachel?"

"Things like children and duty."

"We both love Colin and you do your duty every day, admirably I might add."

"The lighthouse is my other child."

"The lighthouse is your duty. His arms tightened. "Let me help you"

"You are a terrible danger to me, Evan. I love you and would want children with you."

"Then why won't you marry me? "

"Because I love you and do want children with you."

He took out his handkerchief and tenderly wiped away the tears running down her cheeks. "You should avoid me at all costs if that's the way you feel about me."

"That's exactly what I intend to do," she told him. Colin is my only child and the light house is my marriage. It's such a part of me I can't bear the thought of being separated from it."

"You won't have to be separated from your light house or from Colin," Evan promised.

She smiled weakly at him through her tears. "You could get married."

"I won't marry anyone but you," he said touching her hand. "Let me know when you're ready."

That winter Evan worked on the mainland and Rachel and Colin worked in the lighthouse. Evan had taught Colin how to operate the lens and clean and fill the lamps. He had taught Colin how to sound the fog horn. Often Rachel went to the oil room with Colin to oversee his work, but she didn't interfere because he had learned so well from Evan. Then one day in February Rachel slipped as she climbed the tower stairs and broke her ankle. She managed to drag herself to the kitchen, but she didn't know how she could get help. She had forgotten about Colin."

"Mama, did you hurt yourself?' he asked.

"I hurt my ankle."

"I'll get Evan," Colin said.

She laughed through her pain. “How will you get Evan?” You can’t walk to the mainland by yourself.”

“He showed me how to get him back here,” Colin said. Rachel listened to him go into the oil room and suddenly she heard the fog horn sounding.

“Colin!” she shouted. “Turn off the fog horn!”

“Not until Evan comes!” he shouted back.

It took Evan twenty minutes to find Rachel sitting in the kitchen rocker trying to rock the pain of her ankle away. “I’m ready,” she gasped. It took him another week to move back into the lighthouse and the week after that they were married. Colin stood tall and proud beside them Rachel in her meticulously sewn dress and Colin in his black suit. Colin handed them their wedding rings. Rachel flinched when she saw how his fingerprints had tarnished the rings, but then she smiled and discretely wiped them on her skirt when no one was looking.

Michigan City, Indiana Light

"Oct. 8, 1904: "Sold household effects preparatory to vacating deal old St. House." Harriet Colfax, keeper of the Michigan City Indiana Light for 43 years. Her last day on the job was Oct. 12, 1904. She died April 16, 1905, three months after her lifelong friend Ann Hartwell died. Miss Colfax and Miss Hartwell are buried side by side in Michigan City's Greenwood Cemetery.

This story happened in imagination.

1861-1904

The Ladies of the Lake

Harriet took an indignant sip of her tea and spluttered as its wake traveling down her throat. Her brown eyes were puzzled. “We’ve lived here for forty years, Anne. How can they whisper that about us?”

Anne’s eyes flashed blue needles. “It’s not a question of they, Harriet. It’s a question of Mrs. Bromfield and her little group. “

“But to say that we’re unnatural friends! How could they?” A suspicion of tears sparkled in the corner of Harriet’s eyes and she fingered a c major chord on the cameo threaded on a velvet ribbon on her neck. “I’ve taught piano to their children and you’ve taught them the three R’s. How can they even think such a thing much less whisper it?”

"They can and they will. Don't you dare give them the satisfaction of being upset." Anne waggled a finger at Harriet. "And most of all, Harriet, don't be naïve!"

"Anne, I must remind you that we have never quarreled, but it sounds like we are backing into shoal waters." I'm not naïve, Anne. If I were naïve the government wouldn't have hired me to keep their Michigan City Indiana lighthouse."

"You are quite correct, Harriet. We have never quarreled, but I'm not naïve, either, Harriet. You and I and they know that your cousin in Washington had something to do with your light house appointment."

Harriet snapped to defense like she always did at the mention of her lighthouse. "Indeed, we will never quarrel as long as you don't attempt to tend my lighthouse. Perhaps my cousin in Washington helped appoint me, but I am the one who keeps the appointment every day, several times a day. I am the one who traveled that wooden catwalk in petticoats and a long dress to light the lights at the end of the pier."

"Yes, I know, Harriet. The pier is composed of timbers and it is 1,500 feet long. And I have advised you time and again to wear trousers instead of petticoats."

"Trousers! Anne, how could you suggest such a thing! No respectable woman wears trousers! And to think that the Lighthouse Board was going to require me to wear an official uniform with trousers!

Anne laughed. "A uniform complete with dark blue trousers and a coat with yellow buttons. Even a cap with a lighthouse badge."

Harriet frowned. "After all, Anne, the lighthouse inspector wrote me and told me that all female light keepers were except from that requirement. Imagine, blue trousers!

"I would rather have you alive in blue trousers than respectably dead!" I feared that one day you would trip over your skirts or the strong wind would make sails of them and blow you right off the catwalk. Then there was the matter of the lamps and their fuel."

"Yes, fuel," Harriet murmured absently, thinking of the lamps that she had to polish and light in an hour. "At least the storm blew that light away and now I only have to light the one on top of our house."

"But think of the years that you made that perilous trip at least twice a day and lighted the pier head light," Anne said. "I am thankful that you weren't in the light when it blew over.

"I too am glad of that. I well remember that night.

The light was on the beacon but her home was on shore. She reveled in her home on the shore. It was dearer to her than the old homestead in Ogdensburg. A strong, square, homey house, the lantern like cupola on its top was the only thing that distinguished it from any other cozy country home in Michigan City. Eventually a dense grove of trees grew up around the light which threatened to obscure the harbor light. It peered above the tall cottonwoods and willows like a red eye winking between strands of hair. The house stood close to the lake, surrounded by a pretty garden and just a few steps from the fine park of Michigan City.

The pier head light was on the pier so that meant that she had to make the perilous trip to the beacon at the end of the pier every morning and every evening to light and extinguish the lamp. Harriet used lard oil in the lamp. During the winter, the oil had to be heated so that it was in a liquid condition before she went home. It wasn't easy for Harriet to struggle to the beacon on a blizzardy evening, with a pail of hot oil in one hand and a lamp in the other.

It wasn't easy for Harriet to keep her footing on the narrow pier. On those cold and blowy winter nights, she would make sure that her beacon kept burning by heating the lard oil on the

stove in her kitchen. Then she would carry it, running quickly, to the lamps up in the lantern before the oil could "set" again.

Many times when a storm raged her progress was so slow that by the time she reached her beacon the oil had cooled and congealed. But Harriet persisted until the lamp glowed. Once burning, it was safe for the night because the heat transmitted from the burner kept the lard melted.

Besides the lamp, she had to maintain the main light in the tower which projected from the roof of her house. This was the more important of the two and required much of her time, but she tended her lamps cheerfully.

During the migratory season, the bright glare of the light attracted enormous flocks of birds. Blinded by the lights glare as it swept the waters, the birds dashed against the glass panes of the light. They fluttered to the floor, some merely stunned, and others with broken wings or necks. Harriet spent her time not devoted to the lights caring for injured birds and sending them on their flights again. Moths, too, hovered in clouds around the lights. Harriet often amused herself by counting the different colors and species fluttering in its glare.

There was always work to do, a multitude of details that required her constant attention, even while the lamp burned. The official log had to be kept posted with a host of facts. Her data included temperature, barometric readings, weather conditions as they varied from hour to hour, and the behavior of the lamps. Her working day varied from four to five hours or more, and her tasks were more difficult in winter than in summer. During the winter, the lamps had to be

lighted as early as 3:15 p.m, and were not extinguished until 8 o'clock the next morning. In the summer, the lamps only had to be lit for about six hours or so.

Day in, day out, the whole year around, Harriet toiled faithfully to keep the lights burning for Great Lakes sailors. The persistent, steady glare, the twinkling, rhythmic, monotonous turning spokes of Harriet's revolving light gleaming over Lake Michigan's dark waters saved many a mariner from disappearing under the waves.

One wintery evening in 1886, the rhythm of Harriet's lighthouse routine was broken. At dusk, she started out as usual to light the lamp. The wind snapped at her clothes and tried to shove her off her narrow walk. Time after time she was almost swept off her feet. Spray and sand flecked her face, nearly blinding her. She staggered along the narrow wooden pier, dodging the waves flinging themselves at her. She gained the tower which was trembling like a palm tree in a hurricane.

She lit the light and struggled back to shore. Barely had she gained the mainland when glancing towards the lake, she saw the light sway from side to side for a second or two, then crumble into the water. A few minutes later, she heard a crash above the howling the wind. The pier had collapsed and if she had been on it a few seconds earlier, she would have fallen into Lake Michigan with it.

Harriet hurried home through the storm and tended the main light that gleamed from her roof. She kept it burning nonstop for the next three days, because she was afraid that a boat might try to make the harbor and crash on the rocks and sand. The pier was rebuilt and a new beacon placed on its end, but the upkeep was taken over by the harbor authorities. This left only the shore light in her keeping, but

she was happy to continue tending even one light. She trimmed and lit the wick at dusk and extinguished it with her own hands at dawn for many years and the safety of hundreds of sailors on Lake Michigan and thousands of dollars in merchandise depended on her light housekeeping skills.

Harriet sighed with the memory."I have seen many storms, but never one like that. I was sorry to lose the old beacon, in spite of all the trouble and danger it brought me, for I was getting fond of it, and it was a great help to the sailors who didn't know the old harbor entrance."

“You always refused help, even on the stormiest of days,” Anne said.

"I have a helper to carry up the lamps, but always trim and light them myself. In forty-three years none but me have done it. I love the lamps, the old lighthouse, and the work. They are the habit, the home, everything dear I have known for so long. I could not bear to see anyone else light my lamp. I would rather die here than live elsewhere. The work is easier now than it was once. Since the old beacon light was swept away I have but this main light to tend. In the old days they used lard oil for the lamps, and in cold weather we had to heat it. It was great trouble in cold weather to make the old beacon burn. The lard oil would get hard before I could get the lamp lighted, but once lit it never went out, you may be sure. My lights never went out till I quenched them myself."

“In a way I’m glad that the beacon fell into the waves, because that prompted you to ask me to move into your lighthouse with you,” Anne said.

Harriet sipped her tea. “You have been a good companion to me as always,” she said, patting Anne’s hand.

Anne sniffed. “You never told me how close you came to drowning that night, but I knew. We’ve been like sisters for so long that I knew.”

"My lights never went out till I quenched them myself," Harriet said proudly.

Anne shivered and patted Harriet's hand in return. "Lake Michigan almost quenched you."

Harriet knew it was time to change the subject. "But Anne, what makes Mrs. Bromfield think—

Anne curled her lip the way they had practiced together so many years before in their girlhood in Ogdensburg, New York. "They have no conception of sisterhood or duty and they have nothing better to do with their days."

Harriet smiled at her friend. "Our days have been busy since the beginning, haven't they Anne?"

Anne smiled, remembering.

Anne and Harriet, both small boned with whale bone corseted waists and grown up corkscrew curls floated onto the wooden stage for their school end of the year program. The Ogdensburg School District had already hired Harriet to teach the next term and Anne was engaged to be married early in the summer. Harriet presented the history of Ogdensburg and that part of the St. Lawrence River and Anne performed a grammar and mathematical demonstration. Luckily she had practiced her program because dreams of William pushed other thoughts to the outer reefs of her mind. William, how deeply she loved him, and being Harriet's brother made the blessing a double one.

The enthusiastic clapping of the audience still resounded in Anne's ears when William approached her. "Can you get away now, Anne? There is something important I have to discuss with you."

The something important turned out to be a job offer as the publisher of the Michigan City Muse in the newly created city of Michigan City, Indiana. "The change of climate will be salubrious for my health," he argued.

Loving him, she had agreed. They were married that July and took their honeymoon journey by horseback across Pennsylvania and Ohio to reach their new home in Indiana. They bought a white house with a brown picket fence around it on Poplar Street. She planted roses that climbed the fence and sewed and knitted garments for their expected child. They buried their little daughter, Emma, in a white lace dress with a matching bonnet. Anne gently wrapped a pink blanket around her and William tucked it in at the feet to make sure it wouldn't work loose. "No cold feet for Emma," he choked.

It took William two years to build the circulation of the Michigan City Muse and then to die of consumption. Anne believed that she would die too. In fact, she wished and prayed and begged God that she would die. Instead, she took over the Michigan City Muse and continued to build circulation. Soon she discovered that she needed more help, especially in typesetting and reporting, so she wrote to Harriet who was still teaching school back in Ogdensburg. It took Harriet two years to conclude her affairs in Ogdensburg and for the school board to replace her, but finally she arrived in Michigan City to help Anne prosper the Michigan City Muse. They worked and lived together in the white house with the brown picket fence in Michigan City for several years and solidly entrenched the Michigan City Muse. After a time and after training several new typesetters and reporters, Harriet decided she wanted to keep the lighthouse. She

prevailed on her cousin Schuyler Colfax to bend ears and influence in Washington and the Lighthouse Board appointed her keeper of the pier head light in Michigan City.

Anne did not take the change without resistance and tears. "You are lost to me now, just as William and Emma were snatched from me," she sobbed as Harriet packed to move to the lighthouse.

Harriet rushed to hug her. "You have not lost me. The only way that we will ever quarrel is if you try to tend my lighthouse. I will be the only one to tend the light as long as I am light house keeper."

"There's no danger of that," Anne sniffed. "I wouldn't venture out on that pier unless I didn't intend to return."

"Most people venture out on that pier like they do not intend to return," Harriet sniffed. And when indeed Anne did venture out onto the pier in a dark, deep despairing night of missing William and Emma and loneliness , Harriet carefully and competently went after her and dragged her back from the edge of a watery death.

"I'm not certain if I thank you or despise you for this," Anne had told her in the cold voice of resignation.

"You will thank me," Harriet assured her she wrapped her in blankets and forced hot tea down her throat.

Eventually, Anne did thank her and when years late the pier head light collapsed Harriet invited her to come to the house with the light atop it to live, Anne packed up her belongings, including her daguerreotype of William and her heart picture of Emma and once more lived with Harriet. People in the village marveled at a friendship that survived years of living

together. Once Mrs. Bromfield asked Harriet the secret of their relationship and Harriet said,"We never quarrel because Anne does not try to tend my light."

They still had never quarreled because Anne did not try to tend the light. Instead, she tended the rest of the house and presided in the kitchen while Harriet tended her light and taught piano. On Sundays as they had for years, dressed in equally small black dresses and black bonnets they walked from the light house at the edge of the lake into town to the Episcopal Church. Sundays both in church and at the light house were usually as placid as Lake Michigan in a gentle mood. But one Sunday proved to be a different hue.

Laughing at the memory, Anne spoke. "Harriet, do you remember that Sunday at church with Mrs. Bromfield and her consorts?"

Harriet laughed with her. "Of course, I remember it. That Sunday is probably why they stormed up the waters for us."

Harriet had decided to gently but firmly tell Captain Knowles that she could not be his wife. She had intended to do so in the privacy of her sitting room and in fact, had invited him to Sunday dinner. She had spent Saturday night getting Sunday dinner ready. She left the bread rising, the chicken and biscuits ready to cook, the apple pies cooling in the cellar and the peas ready to be shelled and cooked after church. Every Sunday morning of every season, she and Anne dressed like 1850s fashion plates would wend their way arm and arm to the Episcopal Church. Inside the church they smiled and conversed with middle aged men and women who had been their pupils forty years ago, and watched the antics of their children and grandchildren with amused tolerance. They had listened to the sermons and petitions to God of at least four

Episcopal clergymen and oftentimes Harriet thought that her relationship with God was more of a lighthouse than the minister! She kept her opinion to herself though and continued to tend Anne and the church with the same faithful hands that she tended the light.

"I managed to tend everyone but Marshal," she thought ruefully. Marshal Knowles had thundered into her life like Lake Michigan waves. More accurately, the Lake Michigan waves themselves had brought him to her because of her faithful tending of the lighthouse. One intensely stormy night in January, the wind had broken the tower window and blown out the light. Instead of notifying the Lighthouse Service which would have taken at least two weeks, she had improvised a light with some of the lard oil she had left over from the pier head light and managed to keep the light burning until one of the lighthouse tenders had come to repair the light. During one of the evenings in the tower she had spotted a wooden skiff that the waves tossed around like a rubber ball. Quickly she descended the stairs, grabbed a rope and a buoy from the shed, and hurried down to the water's edge. The captain of the skiff was just wading through the surf to the beach. She tossed him the rope and the buoy, just to be certain that the waves wouldn't wash him back into the lake. He tossed them aside like the waves were tossing him and half swam and half waded to safety on the shore.

He removed his water soaked hat and tipped it to her. "You must be the famous Miss Cofax," he rumbled.

"I am. And who might you be, captain?"

"I'm Captain Marshal Knowles, "He glanced at the foundering schooner far out in the lake. "She won't stay afloat much longer and neither would I have stayed afloat much longer. I thank you, Miss Cofax." His teeth were chattering and she could tell that he would soon go into shock from the cold if she didn't warm him up quickly.

She half coaxed, half bullied him up the cliff, even though he insisted that he was no worse for his ordeal. In fact, he insisted on leading the way to the light house. When they reached the door she skipped ahead of him and turned around and tugged at his arm. "Do come in and get warm, Captain Knowles."

She steered him to a chair by the stove and covered him with the knitted afghan from the davenport. She and Anne had each knitted half of the afghan and then sewn it together. The seams were spliced so smoothly that it was impossible to tell where it had been joined in the middle.

"We don't have any gentleman's clothes here, but I will ask Anne to go to the village and fetch some for you in the morning," Harriet said.

"I thank you kindly, Miss Cofax, but I am afraid that if I sit in these wet clothes until morning I'll catch my death of pneumonia."

"Hmm, you are probably right, Captain Knowles. Let me see if I can find a temporary solution to our problem. "

Harriet hurried into her bedroom and burrowed into the back of the closet where she had stowed a box that she had brought with her years ago from Ogdensburg. She pulled out the blue woolen robe and nightgown that Mama had worn during her last years and the matching shawl and nightcap that went with it. She hurried back out into the kitchen with the garments. "Captain, I found something for you to wear! Take these into my bedroom and change. You're shivering."

Captain Knowles held the robe and nightgown up in front of him. "These are dry and likely garments that I can wear. Then he dangled the shawl and nightcap from his right hand. "However, madam, I draw the line at wearing these!"

"But Captain Knowles, you need to change your clothing! "

"I tell you I will not wear a shawl and a nightcap!"

Both of them were shouting at each other by this time and Anne stumbled out into the kitchen, rubbing her eyes. "What's wrong?" What's this gentleman doing here?"

"Anne, may I present Captain Marshal Knowles. Captain Knowles, this is my friend Anne. I fished the captain out of the lake and he refuses to change into dry clothing."

"Perhaps the captain would like some privacy," Anne suggested and Harriet could hear laughter in her voice.

"He will have all of the privacy he needs in my bedroom. I simply asked him to wear the shawl and nightcap that goes with the nightgown and robe. He will soon get warm quickly if he does that."

"I told you woman, I will not wear a shawl and a nightcap!"

"Wear the robe and nightgown then, captain. That will be sufficient," Anne said. "In the morning I will go to the village and get you some pajamas and some gentleman's clothing.

With dignity in every move, Captain Knowles rose from the chair and dangling the gown and shawl and night cap in front of him, he walked slowly to Harriet's bedroom.

"You might just as well go to bed in your dry night clothing," Harriet called after him. "I am going to sleep in Anne's room for the rest of the night."

Harriet slept in Anne's bed and Anne curled up on the love seat next to the window. Harriet got up as usual to tend the light and when she returned to the kitchen she sat at the kitchen table to drink a cup of tea. She fell asleep listening to the sound of the waves crashing against the shore or was it the captain snoring in her bedroom? She wasn't sure which, but she fell asleep over the cup of tea and when she woke up Anne was unwrapped parcels wrapped in brown paper on the table. "I brought him some of William's things that I saved," she said.

Harriet swallowed a lump in her throat. "That's generous of you. "Even though it had been many years since his death, she still missed William.

"Did you notify the coastguard about his skiff?" Harriet asked.

"I sent off a telegram at the post office. He'll have to stay here until he gets situated."

It took several days for Captain Knowles to get situated and by the time that happened, he had become a part of their lives. A coastguardsman came to the lighthouse several days later and greeted Captain Knowles like a fellow captain. It turned out that Captain Knowles was the master of the steamer Sally Ann and when the storm had capsized it, he had loaded everyone into the lifeboats and had tried to save the Sally Ann himself. When she had gone under the Lake Michigan waves, he had used the skiff to safe himself. The coastguardsman had assured them that Captain Knowles was a hero. Harriet already knew the Captain was a fine, moral man He had fit himself into their lives as snugly as a hermit crab into an adopted shell. They had become such warm friends that he declared that he would name his new steamer Harriet Anne, but somehow she knew he emphasized the Harriet without having to look into his black eyes for confirmation. For her part, she liked him so well that she had dreamed one night of him remaining at the lighthouse and helping her tend the light.

For all of that she hadn't expected him to ask for her hand in marriage, but he did one morning while they sat at the kitchen table drinking tea. "Mrs. Colfax, I have a question to ask of you," he said to Anne.

Anne smiled. "I think I know what you're going to ask me, Captain Knowles and as far as I am concerned, I give you my permission. I think you will make dear Harriet very happy."

Harriet blinked. From the direction of the conversation, she thought that the Captain might be asking Anne to marry him, but instead he was what – asking for permission to marry her???"

She straightened her tea cup and lined it perfectly with her saucer. "What did you say?" she asked them both.

"I asked Anne for permission to marry you. Now I ask you, Harriet. Will you consent to be Mrs. Marshal Knowles?"

Harriet felt a strange mixture of things. Joy like a whirlpool surged through her, yet there was fear and an iron reluctance to surrender the life that she had worked so hard to establish.

"I need to think about it," she said. "I care for you Marshal, but I need to think about rearranging my life. I am not fond of change."

She expected him to bluster like he did when she asked him to wear the shawl and nightcap. In fact, she never did find out if he had worn them."

"Did you ever wear that cup and shawl?" she asked him.

He got up from the table and disappeared into the bedroom.

"Oh dear, I didn't mean to offend him," Harriet said. She felt like waves were pulling at her from all directions.

She put her head down and sipped her tea. Then she heard Anne's laughter and looked up in surprise. The Captain stood there with the shawl draped around the shoulders of his jacket and the nightcap lying on top of his brown hair. He had tied the strings under his beard. Harriet laughed so hard she spilled her tea.

But she still didn't give Captain Knowles an answer. "I need to think about it for a few days, please," she said.

She unintentionally gave him her answer in church and in later years she never knew if her answer would have been different if the captain had handled the situation differently. In later years she never knew if her answer would have been different had she handled the situation differently. Even now she set her small chin in resolute lines. She had handled the situation the way she saw fit at the time. Harriet and Anne were settling into the second pew on the right the way they had done every Sunday for decades when she realized that someone else was sitting in their pew and even more disconcertingly, in her seat! She glared at the intruder. "What are you doing here?" she hissed at him.

Captain Knowles didn't hiss back. He just grinned at her and she had a quick memory flash of him wearing her mama's nightcap that went with the wool robe and nightgown. "I have come to marry you." His voice resonated to the back of the church, much louder and stronger than the minister's voice had ever done.

She nudged him in the ribs. "Stop making a spectacle of us," she whispered.

His voice sounded even louder. "Only you can stop the spectacle by agreeing to marry me."

"I will not agree to marry you under these conditions."

He raised an eyebrow at her. "Under what conditions WILL you agree to marry me?"

It was impossible for Harriet to discuss the matter with him in front of the entire congregation of St. John's Episcopal Church in Michigan City Indiana, so she stared straight ahead, trying to pretend he wasn't there.

Captain Knowles couldn't be pretended away. "I will sit here until you agree to marry me."

He sat there through the entire service and was still sitting there when she and Anne left. "I have to go home to tend the dinner that I was going to serve you with your answer," she said. "Now I have your answer. You can still come to dinner, but the answer is no."

She turned and left the pew before Captain Knowles could reply.

He appeared at the lighthouse for the 2:00 p.m. dinner that Harriet had planned. She still didn't change her mind, not even when he wore her mama's shawl and nightcap for the second time. The last word she had of him was that he was master of a steamer that plied between ports on the St. Lawrence River, as far away from her as he could get. Or as close, Anne reminded her, because after all they were from Ogdensburg, New York.

Harriet stared at Anne with surprised brown eyes. “Are you telling me that everyone thinks that you and I are unnatural friends because I didn’t marry the Captain? Is that where Mrs. Bromfield got her notion?”

“That helped move her notion along, Harriet.”

“Then let her push the notion as far as she can. We both know what we are and who we loved.”

“I know you love him, Harriet. Why didn’t you marry him?”

“I am already married to my lighthouse. If I had met him sooner…”

“But Harriet, the lighthouse as we knew it is being changed. We’re sitting here having a cup of tea and we can hear the carpenters working on the new lights. The new keepers and their families will arrive in Michigan City in a few weeks. It is no longer your light. Even if you don’t resign, it’s no longer your light.”

Harriet sighed. “The carpenter’s are making so much noise installing all of the new fangled improvements. I can’t say that I like changes very much. And I have not spoken of resigning," she said. "I can't bear to leave the dear place and the old light. I expected to die here with you and the place just as it has been for so long."

“It is a new age, Harriet and we are remnants of the old age. We must either compromise with it or die as part of the old.”

Harriet’s brown eyes were thoughtful. "If I remain it will be necessary to have help, of course, but I would have all the responsibility, just as I have always had. It might be all right that way. But no. No. It can never be the same after my old light is gone. I don't know how I shall sleep, knowing that it is out and that I cannot light it again."

Anne drank the last of her tea and went to wash the cup in the dry sink. “We must compromise, Harriet, if we are to survive.”

Harriet frowned. “Survive to what? Survive for what? Perhaps the old should die with the old.”

Anne frowned back. “You of all people are saying that to me, Harriet? You, who saved my life when I wanted to die with old love!”

Harriet walked over to the lamp that she had placed on the stove while she heated the lard oil. As she poured the lard oil into the lamp without the funnel that she always used, she splashed some of it on her hand.

“Ouch! I have burned myself,” she exclaimed.

Anne resumed her seat at the table.

“Anne, I burned myself.”

“Harriet, you wish to handle things yourself.”

“Anne, I need some assistance.”

Anne hurried over to Harriet and Harriet smiled as she inserted the funnel and poured the rest of the oil into the lamp.

Lake Superior

St. Ignace Lighthouse, Lake Superior

St. *Ignace Lighthouse was the first lighthouse that the Canadian government built on Lake Superior and one of six in a chain of beacons the government built from Collingwood to Fort William. Although the light was built in 1866 on Talbot Island, it was named for nearby St. Ignace Island. St. Ignace Light earned the name "The Lighthouse of Doom," because during its six years of operation all of its three keepers died on the job. The Canadian Government closed the St. Ignace Light in 1872.*

This story happened in imagination.

Tending the Light Keeper

The first part of John Young that Molly Sargeant met was his laugh that boomed out at her when she said, "I'm very pleased to meet you."

"Why are you laughing at me?" she asked.

"I'm laughing at you because you're a pretty black haired lass and I'm twice as pleased to meet you."

Molly was pleased to meet the rest of him besides his laugh. She and her friend Tilda had come to the festival at Orillia with Tilda's fiancé Stephen in 1862. Stephen had spotted his friend John over at the carnival booth and he had joined them and stayed with them for the rest of the evening. By the time the evening was over, Molly knew that she wanted to see John again, and again.

She did see John every week and soon they were courting and talking about marrying. Then one night he told her that he and Stephen were joining the Union Army in the United States to fight the Confederacy.

"Why would you want to do such a foolish thing?" she demanded

"Because I believe in freedom," he told her. "The Union's not perfect, but it's fighting toward an ideal."

Molly wasn't sure that fighting for an ideal was entirely safe for John, but she loved him so much she believed it because he did.

They were married in 1863 in her home at Cranston, before she knew that John had indeed enlisted in the Union Army. In her deepest heart Molly realized that even if he had told her he was going to join the Union Army she still would have married him.

They bought a farm outside of Cranston, not far from her parent's home and John planted a crop that spring that she and her hired help would harvest in the fall. When John left that summer to fight with the Second Minnesota Sharpshooters, Molly was pregnant, but she still helped with the harvest. John was wounded at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania while Molly gave birth to their son Johnnie in Ontario. Molly left Johnnie with her parents in Cranston while she traveled all of the way to the hospital in Washington D.C. to be with John. The sights and sounds and smells of the city sickened her, especially the smell of chloroform and the reek of horse manure and garbage in the streets. The sight of John in the hospital cot, one of a long row of wounded soldiers, his face whiter than the sheets, terrified her. She wanted to take him home to the clean, healing Ontario air.

John patted her hand and gritted his teeth, fighting the pain, fighting her will. "I'm going to rejoin my regiment as soon as I can," he said.

Molly knew that he would have limped back to his regiment, but the shifting winds of war like the shifting winds of Lake Superior intervened. Robert E. Lee surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Court House in Virginia in 1865 and the war ended. John's wound and John's pain didn't end with it. He came home to Cranston, bringing both with him along with crutches and a wartime attitude. Seeing his son Johnnie for the first time scraped the raw edges of his soldiering years, but didn't smooth them out. He had also developed a cough and chronic diarrhea while soldiering and they hung on even though the war had ended. One September day Molly went out to the fields to help him shuck corn and found him thrashing the corn like it was a Confederate soldier.

"John, you've got to do something. You're not happy here anymore."

"I know Molly, but I don't know if there is anywhere I can be happy. I thought I was fighting for freedom, but I discovered that even ideals like freedom are tainted by human nature."

"John, life isn't pure and it isn't black and white. Shades of gray predominate."

He hugged her. "Molly, how did you get to be so wise?"

"I grew up while you were gone. Did you?"

"What's that supposed to mean, Molly?"

"It means that even if an ideal is tainted as you put it, you don't give up on it. You just fight to improve its imperfections."

"Molly, I came out here to shuck corn, not to argue metaphysics with you."

"Then why are you killing the corn because you don't have an enemy to kill? You need to find an occupation, John."

That year, 1867, John found an occupation that even Molly had not imagined. He petitioned the Canadian Department of Marine and Fisheries to become the second keeper of the St. Ignace Light. John told Molly about the light while they were sitting at the kitchen table having a cup of tea after she had put Johnnie to bed. "The government calls it the St. Ignace Light but everyone else calls it the Talbot Island Light. It's located about three miles from St. Ignace Island on Talbot Island in the lake."

She knew that 'the lake' was Lake Superior even though they lived close to Georgian Bay and Lake Huron. "It sounds very remote, John."

His voice oozed satisfaction. "It is remote, Molly."

"Do you think living there will ease your heart, John?"

"I think it will ease my heart, Molly, but I don't think it will ease your mind. I know I am being very selfish expecting you and Johnny to endure the hardships of life on Talbot Island Light."

"Hardships, John?"

“Molly, the island is remote, far from Sault Ste. Marie. It is a problem for the government to remove the keeper from the island at the end of the navigational season before freeze up.”

“So what does the government do to solve the problem?”

“They solve it in the typical government way. They leave it up to the keeper to make his own way to winter quarters, although they do leave him guidelines.”

Molly put her head in her hands. “What happened to the keeper before you?”she mumbled.

“He followed the government instructions. In November he closed the lighthouse and headed for the Hudson’s Bay Company post at Nipigon in an open boat.”

Molly raised her head. “And the rest of the story, John?”

“The rest of the story is that they found his body last spring on the mainland of Nipigon Bay. He was fourteen miles away from Hudson’s Bay.”

“That’s where you’re going to keep the light, John?”

“You’re not going with me?”

“What about Johnny and the farm? You yourself said that you were being selfish expecting me and Johnny to endure the hardships of light keeping. I could stay here and keep the farm like I did during the war while you keep the light. It would only be six months of the year. We could spend the rest of the time together.”

John took her hand in his and kissed it. “I don’t know if I can manage without you, Molly, but I’ll try.”

Both of them tried for three months of the 1867 navigational season, but before harvest time Molly visited her mother and made arrangements to leave Johnny with her for four months. “Papa and I will return in November and we’ll all spend the winter together,” she promised.

The journey to Talbot Island proved to be strenuous even though Molly had toughened her body with had labor on the farm. She packed two valises knowing that she could take only the possessions that she could carry. She traveled overland by train and hired a fishing boat to take her to Talbot Island. She had not written to John that she was coming, so when at last she caught sight of the light rising above the island her spirit soared and she knew that she had come home. She studied the white painted wooden building and its square tower carefully. It, not the farm in Cranston was home, or it would be when they had fetched Johnny here. Home was John and Johnny and John and Johnny were home. She knew that to the bottom of her practical spirit, even though love and belonging were impractical, imprecise ideals. That very evening she helped John clean, polish, and then light the three kerosene lamps.

Molly and John enjoyed a second honeymoon on Talbot Island. He taught her how to tend the light and they traded shifts and often worked together to insure that it shone over the tumultuous Lake Superior waves and guided mariners safely over shoals and through storms.

The crashing of waves over the rocks and against the sides of the light house heralded the coming of autumn and John and Molly awaited the arrival of government directions for them to

leave the island. A drenched fisherman delivered the government instructions during a lull in one of the succession of storms that buffeted the island in October.

"You had better get yourself off the light while you still can," he advised them. "Looks like we're gonna have a lot more storms like this one. You'll end up spending the winter here if you don't get off now. Come along with me."

John read the letter from the government. "They say I can't leave until November, but Molly can go with you now," he told the fisherman.

Molly shook her head and the movement caused her dark hair to fly in all directions as if the wind had come inside to blow it. "I'll wait for you, John even if it takes all winter."

They hadn't planned things that way, but John and Molly ended up wintering over on St. Ignace Light. The fisherman's prophecy had come to pass and it seemed to Molly that after his visit one continuous Lake Superior storm battered the island for the next two months. They were marooned there, despite government instructions to the contrary. Luckily the government had stocked the lighthouse with a surplus of supplies, and Molly's careful managing and cooking stretched them to fit their needs. In January it seemed to Molly that John's cough had gotten worse and his leg wound pained him more.

"It's just the damp here, Molly," he told her through clenched teeth. "I just have to keep moving."

John kept moving until the day he died. She had already marked that day off the calendar with an X and thrown it in the waste basket, but later on that night she returned and retrieved the

calendar leaf. That day, January 12, 1868, would be forever etched in black bordered lines in her memory, but she put the paper in her pocket to give to Johnny when she got home. She wrote the facts in stark, black bordered letters in the keeper's log: *January 12, 1868. Woke up this morning beside John as usual As usual I shook him to wake him, but he took a long time to wake up. I pulled the covers off of him before I built up the fire. That didn't arose him. I touched his wounded leg. That didn't arouse him. I shouted in his ear. That didn't arouse him. I poured cold water over his hair and beard. That didn't arouse him. Nothing I did, not even shouting "I love you, John, at the top of my lungs woke him up. I pulled up his nightgown and watched for the rise and fall of his chest to assure myself that he breathed. His chest did not rise and fall. I knew that John would not wake up on this day or any other earthly day.*

The first night after John's death, Molly slept beside him, believing against unbelief that her love and warmth would bring him back to her. For most of the night she willed him back to warmth and light as she provided warmth and light to mariners out on the dark lake. Twice she got up and covered him with wool blankets. She left a steaming cup of tea on his pillow when she had to leave to tend the light. The howling of the wind and pelting of the snow against the windows echoed the turmoil in her soul.

When she got back into bed early the next morning, she put her arms around him, hoping to feel his warmth as she had in the past. She breathed faster, breathing for him, longing for him as she fell asleep. Later that morning, she awoke holding his stiff, cold body and the stiffness and cold of her soul that knew he was gone. But she had to keep him warm. She had to tend his body because there was no way to bury it on this island made of rock, even if the weather had been kinder than death. Rummaging desperately through the downstairs storage closet, she found a

piece of sail canvas and dragged it upstairs. "It's a good thing I did keep in shape working on the farm," she thought as she rolled John's body up in the canvas and shoved it off the bed. Carefully she eased him down the hallway and step by step, down the stairs, through the parlor, and out into the frigid 20 degree below zero air.

Bending double she slid him over the snow like she used to slid Johnny in his sled, over the slope of the side lawn to the rock garden in back of the lighthouse. She remembered the little cave where she and John had picnicked last fall and she remembered thinking what good shelter it provided from the wind. She knew that it would shelter John in this winter of his death. She tenderly eased his body into the cleft in the rock. Words strung across her consciousness…he hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock…where had she read those words? She knew, but she didn't want to acknowledge the source of the words because then she would have to acknowledge….the Lord giveth and the Lord taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord. She wasn't ready to bless the name of the Lord yet. Not for this!

After she had settled John firmly into the sheltering rock, she fought the wind to get back into the lighthouse. She snatched two woolen blankets from their bed and took them out to John. She tucked them firmly around him. "I'll be back later," she promised.

Molly spent the next three months tending the light house and John and her memories of him. Every day she brushed the snow off the blankets and tucked them around him more firmly. When the winds roared and threatened to whip the blankets from him, she weighed them down with rocks. When darkness threatened to quench life and hope, she carried her largest lantern to him and left it still burning for him when she had to tend the light.

She spent her time not tending the light and John reviving their life together as if reliving it would make him magically reappear. She remembered the night they met and how she had immediately sensed that he would shape her life. She remembered the way he looked when he asked her to marry him and what he had said. They were sitting in her father's horse and buggy in the woods behind their barn in Cranston, Ontario. She had been admiring the full moon and the quilt of stars that covered the sky. He took her hand and said, "I don't want to live my life without you, Molly. Will you marry me? I'll try to be worthy of you."

It sounded so good that Molly had agreed to marry him. She should have realized the flinty, gray rocks of selfishness beneath the passionate tides of his actions. Not telling her he had enlisted in that American Army until after they were married! He had left her to take care of their farm all alone! He had left her alone to care for Johnny! He had left Johnny too! But a voice lodged in her reason, not a still, small voice, but a large, noisy one, insisted, "true, John was selfish, but part of that selfishness helped you, just as part of your selfishness in being your own person helped him. You learned from each other. Your marriage is more partnership than dictatorship."

"I don't care how selfish he is, I want him back," she shouted to the storm raging outside.

Her remembering didn't bring John back, no matter how fiercely she concentrated. The blanket of snow covering his rocky grave grew so thick in February that she had to use a tin dishpan to scoop the snow away. She did that every morning and evening during February and March. In April, the snow storms abated and clouds of white seagulls seeking spring food fluttered around the island. She had nightmares about gulls and other birds pecking his flesh so

she stood vigil by his grave when she wasn't tending the light. She left a lantern burning there at night to keep the birds away. The air turned warmer and caressed her cheek like John used to do instead of beating against it. Frequently she scanned the horizon, looking for a ship that would rescue them. Some days the horizon beamed back at her, suffused with sunshine and blue skies, but empty. Other days it glared back at her with the threat of storms and returning winter. Finally, one early May day the silhouette of a ship made a stark black etching against the blue horizon. She had fastened one of John's shirts to a broom and she stood at the edge of the water vigorously waving her improvised flag back and forth. She saw a tiny figure in the bow of the boat wave back. "They're coming for us, John," she whispered. "We're finally being rescued."

Molly saw a tiny figure in the bow of the boat returning her wave. The tiny figure grew into a man as the boat drew nearer and Molly saw two other men in the boat with him. She watched the men beach their boat and she continued to stare at them as they walked slowly toward her. Should she try to push them back into her imagination or patiently and gently draw them out into the reality of the moment?

The three men stepped into reality.

"Are you the only one here?" the leader asked.

Molly answered him with a question. "What is your name, sir?"

"My Ojibwa name is Byen. Or if you must speak French and English, Pierre or Peter. We are out fishing and we saw your flag."

The soft spring wind stirred Molly's black hair and she tried to smooth it back down.

Byen smiled at her. "Your hair is black like a raven's wing," he said.

"Byen, I must take you to my husband ."

She beckoned and Byen and his men followed her up to the light house and around back to John's grave. "My husband died last winter and I had to let him rest here because the ground is too rocky to dig a grave."

Silently the Ojibwa helped Molly remove the rocks that protected John's body and they lifted the canvas that covered him on their shoulders and carried it toward their boat. Molly hurried along behind them, tucking the wool blankets around the canvas. "Please be careful," she begged Byen. "Don't jar him."

The three Ojibwa eased John's body into the boat and helped Byen helped Mary who was still holding the broomstick flag, into the boat and motioned her to a seat. They rowed toward a small dark speck ahead of them on the horizon. Mary knew that it was Bowman Island. "Is it rocky?" she asked Byen.

"It can be used," he assured her.

They carried John ashore and wound their way through the woods until they finally discovered a small, sunlit clearing. They rested John under the trees while they burrowed through the soil digging his grave. Molly used the broom stick with his shirt still attached to do her part of the digging. It took them all afternoon, but they dug a hole deep enough for John to fit into

and buried him. Molly planted the broomstick with John's shirt on it on top of his grave. She stood with her head bowed and then she turned to Byen. "It's time to go.

"Where are you going?" Byen asked her.

"I have to tend the light," she said.

She tended the light for several more weeks until the government, breaking its protocol, sent a ship to collect her and her belongings. She returned to Johnny and to their farm and she tended them both for the rest of her life.

A few years after Molly died and long after the government had discontinued St. Ignace light, Johnny traveled to St. Ignace Island and to Bowman Island. He wanted to see where his father had died and where his mother had worked so hard to care for him that long terrible winter. Johnny rented a log cabin on the mainland and spread that word that he was looking for an Ojibwa called Byen and one day, an old Indian appeared on his doorstep.

"I am Byen. What do you want with me?"

"I am Johnny Young. You helped my mother Molly many years ago. Now I ask that you help me. "

"You want to see your father's grave." Byen beckoned. "Come. I have a boat."

He didn't ask about Molly and Johnny sensed that Byen knew that Molly was dead. Johnny picked up a package wrapped in brown paper and followed Byen down to the pier.

They made a silent journey to Talbot Island Byen beached the boat. “I will wait for you here,” he told Johnny.

Johnny stared at the abandoned light house that time and neglect had reduced to a dilapidated ruin. His mother and father had taken better care of the light than the government, Johnny thought as he climbed the sagging stairs. The government had not been any too careful in cleaning out its property either, he thought as he walked through the light house. Cups and saucers still stood on the rickety wooden kitchen table. Johnny walked over and touched a cup. His mother had probably been the person who had put the cup there. He shied away from the bedroom, not really wanting to see where his father had died, but he did climb the stairs to the tower room. The last keeper had left the pages of the log open to the page where he had made his last entry. Johnny leaned over to read the entry.

November, 1872. Keeper John Young died about four years ago today and I saw his wife Molly tonight. Local fishermen have been telling me stories about her for years, but I never believed it until tonight. The moon shone brighter than the light as I looked out over The Lake which gleamed like a parlor mirror. I saw a movement down among the trees on the other side of the light and I ran down the stairs and across the yard to find out who was on the island. I saw a woman with pure white hair walking through the trees. She wore a blue dress with a black cloak pulled over it and she kept glancing around as if she were searching for someone. Then I heard her voice. “John,” she called softly and the tenderness in her voice brought tears to my eyes. “John.”

I wanted to help her more than I had ever wanted anything in my life. “Where did you last see John?” I asked her. She stared at me without really seeing me, patted her white hair, and disappeared. I attest that this story is true. I didn’t have time to search for her or the absent John because I had to close and leave the lighthouse. Andrew Hynes, Keeper.”

Johnny knew the government wouldn’t care so he tore that page out of the keeper’s log and hurried back down the stairs and out the door to Byen and his waiting boat. “I need to go to Bowman Island,” he said. He pulled his package wrapped in brown paper from under the seat of the boat and tucked it inside of his jacket. Shortly they arrived on Bowman Island and this time Byen followed him down the path to the small clearing that held his father’s grave. His father’s shirt, much more time tattered, but still in one piece, flapped on the broomstick on top of his grave.

Johnny turned to Byen. “My mother came home from that lighthouse with white hair.”

Byen looked stoically ahead at his father’s grave.

Johnny spoke again. “Andrew Hynes, the third and last light keeper, had a terrible time trying to reach Silver Islet where the government had told him to winter over. He finally got there after traveling 18 days to cover 50 miles. He was so exhausted and had suffered from hypothermia so long that he died. The government closed the lighthouse after that. “

Byen finally spoke. “The fisherman say it is the Lighthouse of Doom.”

Johnny took the brown package from his coat and unwrapped it. He took the plaque that it contained and put it next to the broomstick. The words on the plaque said: In memory of John and Molly Young, Talbot Island Light keepers.

“It was the lighthouse of love,” Johnny said.

Rock of Ages Light-Isle Royale-Lake Superior

The Rock of Ages consists of a strip of exposed rock fifty feet wide and 210 feet long with its highest point extending 16 feet above the water. It lies 2 ½ miles off the western end of Isle Royale. The changing navigational patterns of the 1890s made the Rock of Ages a critical impediment to the safe navigation of Lake Superior and after years of funding denials from Congress, the Lighthouse Board finally achieved funding of the light in winter 1906-1907 and the light was initially lighted on September 15, 1910.

. *This story happened in imagination.*

Another Solitary Winter

Meg stood in the cabin doorway taking inventory of her winter preparations. She could still hear the crash and roar of the Lake Superior breakers, but she knew that they had no winter voices. Usually the only sounds that she and her husband Matt heard during the winter were gulls and animals in the woods. She heard the squeaking of a mouse somewhere under the floor of the cabin. They really needed a cat to control the mouse problem, but so far they hadn't acquired one. Maybe next summer she'd buy one from the mainland during one of the steamer *America's* stops and try to acclimate it to the island before winter arrived.

Meg turned and went back into the cabin and peeled some potatoes to fry for supper. She would heat the left over rabbit stew from yesterday along with some applesauce and that would make a warm, hearty supper for them when Matt returned from his trap lines.

Meg didn't travel with Matt on his trap lines much in the summer and fall since she held a summer job as housekeeper on the steel passenger propeller *America.* Built in 1889 in Wyandotte, Michigan, the *America* was designed to carry passengers and package freight. The Booth Fisheries, a Chicago firm, purchased the *America* and in 1904 assigned her to traverse the north shore of Lake Superior between Duluth, Minnesota and Port Arthur, Ontario. The *America* made dozens of stops to pick up fish or deliver supplies to the many fishing families who had settled the north shore and Isle Royale. She would stop at a port and blow her whistle and a fishing boat would come to load its fish aboard her.

Margaret and Matthew Nelson, Meg and Matt to everyone they knew, lived on Siskiwit, Isle Royale, all year around, weathering the long, lonely winters together. Matt served as game warden for the Michigan Conservation Department on Siskiwit, Isle Royale, in Upper Lake Superior. One of Matt's duties as game warden was to trap bobcats and wolves and other predatory animals and his daily territory patrol was 55 miles long and eight miles wide.

During the day Meg shared Matt's work with him, going out regularly with him on his trap line runs. Last winter on one of their trap line runs, Meg and Matt had discovered a wolf cub in one of Matt's traps. The cub snarled as Matt bent over to open the trap door. "Maybe we could keep him for a pet," Meg said, bending over and crooning to the cub.

"You know better, Meg. Listen to him."

"I'm listening, but maybe I could tame him if I kept at it long enough. He can't be any worse than some of the passengers on the *America*."

Matt gave in to her pleading eyes and they put the wolf cub in a burlap sack and carried him back to their cabin. They put him in one of the iron cages they had in the barn and over the next several months Meg had fed and tamed the wolf cub that she called Luke. Luke became so tame that eventually he followed Meg around the cabin and accompanied Meg and Matt on their trap line runs. She patted Luke who was sitting at her feet, enjoying the warmth of the fire. "You're a good boy," she said.

Luke sprang up from his seat by the fire and went to the cabin door and whined, so Meg knew that Matt was returning from his trap lines. She opened the door and quickly drew him in. "The night's are starting to get cold," she said as she helped him off with his jacket."

"The fishermen say it's going to be a hard winter," Matt said.

"All of the winter's on Isle Royale are hard," Meg said. "But we can survive them and they are beautiful."

"Survive them, yes. Think they're beautiful, I 'm not sure," Matt said as he washed his hands in the bowl and pitcher by the kitchen door.

"It's going to be us and Luke. Another solitary winter," Matt said, sipping his coffee.

The Nelson's cabin on Siskiwit stood in thick woods about one hundred yards back from the shore. It contained a bed built into the wall in the main room, a cook stove, a small table, one chair, and a soapbox that substituted for another chair. A small flight of stairs led to an upstairs loft that contained a bed and a chest of drawers. Traps, guns, and a side of bacon hung on the walls and a mice nibbled sack of flour stood in the corner.

Outside Matt had built a small barn and an attached outhouse. The air grew cooler each morning the Nelsons made their respective trips to the outhouse. The scarlets, yellows, and oranges of the leaves heralded autumn and soon the first snowflakes of winter drifted gently onto the roof of their cabin. Meg well knew that snowflakes did not always drift gently on Siskiwit. Lake Superior produced blizzards of stinging snow that often made winter travel impossible, so she and Matt spent weeks preparing for winter, laying in stores of food and firewood and weather proofing the cabin.

For the next month, Meg and Matt continued her preparations for the hovering, relentless winter. They thought nothing of being winter bound on Isle Royale. From November when the *America* and her successors made their last trip and navigation closed until spring, the island was completely isolated. Fishermen locked up their log houses and departed for the mainland. The lighthouse keepers from Passage Island and Rock of Ages lights at the eastern and western ends of Isle Royale left when floes of restless ice replaced the freighters on the steel gray winter face of Lake Superior. Big boats froze in the harbor and no small boat could pass the twenty five miles of broken ice to the mainland nor could a man walk over it. If someone got sick, there was no way to get a doctor. A few fishermen and their families wintered at Washington Harbor for the first time in 1922. "And no one got sick," Matt pointed out to her more than once.

"You told me about a time when somebody did get sick," Meg reminded him.

"Oh yeah, that was Foster. He used to be game warden here. He got appendicitis during his second winter here and tried to get someone to operate on him."

Meg wrinkled her nose. "Operate on him! Who on the island would do that?"

"Nobody would," Matt said.

"What happened to him?" Meg asked.

"Well, the pain got to him so bad one day that he made a lance out of a spike and cut out his appendix. He limped around for a couple weeks and then he died."

"Remind me not to take out your appendix," Meg said, bending over her cards.

The lurking winter on Siskiwit advanced stealthily like a wolf stalking a deer. By mid-November the last mail boat had headed for warmer harbors and the light keepers from Rock of Ages Light headed to the mainland. By mid-November, Meg and Matt had finished their winter proofing. The first big storm of the season came the first week in December and they settled in for a long, lonely winter. One evening after supper they both settled into their chairs in front of the fire with a small wooden table in front of them and began to play their usual game of cribbage.

"You've been threatening to tell me some of your wilderness stories, Matt. How did you come to decide you wanted to be a game warden?"

"It was simple enough, Meg. When I was a young man I wandered over Minnesota and Canada trapping and hunting and then for two years I went into the Canadian wilderness and lived alone trapping all winter. I came out of the woods with three thousand dollars worth of mink, fisher, martin, lynx and beaver pelts. Later on that year I trapped on Isle Royale with some Indian friends."

Meg turned over one of her cards. "You learned your lessons well."

Matt smiled at her. “I liked the sound of coins jingling together in my pocket. And speaking of coins, what’s this I hear about the *America* and treasure on Pete’s Island?”

“The *America* docks on Pete’s Island several times a week and there’s lots of buildings and piers that got built up around the dock.”

“What does that have to do with treasure, Meg?”

“Well, you’ve heard the stories about Pete, haven’t you, Matt?”

“Some of them. One of the fishermen said that Pete didn’t believe in banks so he buried his money around his home on Pete’s Island.”

“You know he’s dead now, Matt.”

“I know. I think he died the winter before last. “

“Last summer one of the people on the *America* went treasure hunting on the island.”

“Did they find anything, Meg?”

No, or at least nothing they’re willing to talk about.”

“One of the fishermen said he found a coffee can of coins on Pete’s Island, but he isn’t telling where.”

“There are people on the *America* every summer going out to look for treasure on Pete’s Island.”

“You’ll probably have some this summer, too, but we can relax now that it’s winter,” Matt said.”We won’t see anyone else until spring.”

Suddenly Luke growled and the hair stood up on the back of his neck. Meg heard a pounding noise at the front of the cabin. “I don’t believe it. There’s somebody at the door!” she said.

Matt hurried to the door and cautiously opened it. A tall, thin, shivering man with snow in his black beard stood there. The wind whipped his scarf and ruffled his coat. He took off his hat and bowed to Matt and Meg who had come up behind her husband. “How do m’am. Lee Hobbs is my name.”

“Come right in out of the cold,” Meg said. She and Matt spent the next few minutes helping Lee Hobbs take off his heavy winter coat and hat and boots and get warm by the fire. Meg brought him a steaming cup of coffee and he sat and sipped it gratefully. Finally, Lee Hobbs stopped shivering and put down his cup. “I thank you kindly for the hospitality,” he said.

“What brings you this way at this time of the year?” Matt asked.

“I went to Pete’s Island in September to look for treasure, and I missed the last boat out,” Lee Hobbs said.

Meg couldn’t believe her ears. “You mean you’ve been on the island all alone since September?”

“Not since September. I came off the island with a fisherman at the end of September and I spent the month of October working with a him to earn my passage back to the mainland. By

the time I had earned enough money for passage the last boat had gone. The fisherman told me I could stay in his shanty for the winter, but it's cold and lonesome. The wind howling makes me want to scream or jump off one of the cliffs."

"We have an extra loft bedroom. Why don't you stay with us until spring?" Meg said.

"I'd like to do that, ma'am," Lee Hobbs said. "And please call me Lee."

It took Lee Hobbs a few weeks to settle in with Meg and Matt and it took him even longer to stop shuddering every time Luke howled or got close to him, but by Christmas Lee Hobbs had gotten comfortable enough with Luke to quickly pat him on the head.

Meg and Matt and Lee Hobbs had just finished eating the Christmas turkey dinner and were halfway through their pumpkin pie when Luke growled and they heard a pounding on the cabin door. Meg hurried to open it and she pulled in a short, stout , snow covered man. He took off his hat and shook off the snow, revealing flame red hair and bushy red eyebrows.

"Harry Hankins! What the devil are you doing still here?" Matt demanded. "You were supposed to have left with the mail boat in November."

Meg collected her surprise and her manners. "Lee Hobbs, I'd like to introduce Harry Hankins, the keeper of the Rock of Ages Light. Harry, this is Lee Hobbs. He's a treasure hunter."

Instead of politely shaking hands, the two men both put up their fists and lunged at each other. It took Matt and Meg working together to separate them. Matt stepped bodily between them and Meg grabbed Luke and her broom to threaten them apart. Meg herded Lee Hobbs to a

chair on one side of the fire and Matt herded Harry Hankins to a chair on the other side of the fire.

Meg handed them a calming cup of tea and Matt sat down between them with Luke at his elbow just in case. “Now what is the problem with you two?” he asked while the two combatants reluctantly sipped Meg’s tea.

“Say Meg, what did you put in this tea? It’s mighty good,” Harry said.

“I put a little whisky in it to smooth things out,” Meg said.

Both men took enthusiastic gulps of tea. Lee Hobbs said, “Mr. Hankins cheated me out of my treasure.”

Harry Hankins carefully sat his tea cup on his lap. “He caused me to leave the Rock of Ages light too late to catch the mail boat. Someone reported that he drowned and I spent three weeks looking for his body. I had to spend an extra month on the light and when the terrible weather made me leave the light and seek better shelter, I couldn’t find a comfortable place to stay. The fishermen that stay on the island over the winter have their families with them and there’s not any room for an extra person in their shanties. I’ve been staying with the Gustafsons, but I can’t stand to listen to their baby cry one more night. I thought I’d come over here and see if you can put me up until spring.”

“Of course we can,” Meg said. “You can share the loft with Lee Hobbs. There’s plenty of room up there.”

“I wouldn’t share a room with him if he were the last port in a storm or the last lamp in the lighthouse,” Harry blustered.

“I wouldn’t share a room with him if he were the last coin in Pete’s treasure,” Lee Hobbs counter blustered.

Matt left Luke to guard the two men and he walked over to the window. “The wind’s blowing and the snow’s collecting,” he said.

The wind blew and the snow collected for the rest of the winter. The Lake Superior weather and Luke and Meg and Matt together convinced Lee Hobbs and Harry Hankins to bunk together for the rest of the winter. But Lake Superior mariners were astonished to find the Rock of Ages Light flashing over the stormy March waters of Lake Superior instead of calmer April billows. And Meg and Matt just smiled when Pete ‘s Island residents asked them how Lee Hobbs managed to start his treasure hunting on Pete’s Island so early that year.

Lake Huron and Georgian Bay

Thunder Bay Lighthouse-Lake Huron, Michigan

First built in 1832, the Thunder Bay Island Light House tower served to warn mariners of the dangerous reefs that extended from the island. Although the federal government owned the island, people settled there as squatters on the federal land. By 1845 about 160 people lived on the island and among themselves they owned about 31 fishing boat and harvested 12,000 barrels of fish every year. The government finally instituted court procedures to remove the squatters from the island, but the squatters moved more swiftly than the government. They packed their belongings and relocated and permanently settled on nearby Sugar Island.

This story happened in imagination.

The Squatters

October 1846

Mama set down the suitcase with a thud at the foot of the lighthouse stairs. Her black eyes flashed. She drew herself up to her full four feet ten inches and took a deep breath.

I won't stay," she told Papa. "The sight of water whichever way I look makes me lonesome and blue!"

Mary couldn't hear Papa's answer, but she warmed to the low rumble of his voice. She saw Papa put his arm around Mama and she knew that at least tonight they would stay at the Thunder Bay Island Lighthouse in Lake Huron.

Mary and her brother, Jacob, raced each other up the circular stairway leading to the lighthouse living quarters. They dashed into the supply room where the kerosene wicks and extra lamp chimneys were stored. Mary stood at the top of the stairs, her flowing brown hair and wide skirts blowing in the gusty wind.

"Hurry, Papa!" she shouted into the wind. "I want to go up to the room on top."

Papa walked away from Mama and climbed the stairs, but much more slowly than Jacob and Mary had raced up them. "There will be time enough for exploring, Mary. And you need to be better dressed for climbing stairs."

"Papa, look!" Jacob jumped up and down and pointed over the iron railing. "Look, Papa, I can see the lumber camp."

Mary pushed next to him. "Papa look, I can see the church steeple and some of the houses in Alpena!"

Papa had told them all of these things about their new home, but Mary thought that seeing them for herself made them more real and more fun.

"Let's explore the tower room, Papa," she begged.

In the tower room Papa showed Jacob and Mary how to light the lanterns. By the time they had finished, darkness had tucked itself in around the lighthouse like a snug quilt. Papa had to light a lantern to lead them safely back down the narrow winding stairs.

Mama stood in the doorway, waiting for them. She tapped her small foot and her black eyes flashed. "Jacob, we will leave in the morning," she told Papa.

Papa patted her on the shoulder. “Now, now, Katie. When our work is done there will be time enough to leave.”

Mary admired the way the lamplight made Papa’s hair and beard a circle of brown light around his face. She liked the way the lantern light rippled over Mama’s black hair. She tiptoed over and touched Mama’s blue dress. “Mama, you look pretty in the lamplight,” Mary said. Mama was so pretty and she did everything swiftly and surely with her small hands. Mary knew she could never do things as well as Mama. She hugged Mama.

Jacob hugged Mama, too, something that he didn’t do very often now that he was nine and growing taller. “Can we live here, Mama? It will be fun to go to school in a rowboat every day.”

“Mama, Papa can show me how to clean the light and all of the other chores we have to do. I promise I’ll help him every day. Can’t we stay?” Mary begged.

‘Mary, Mary, quite contrary, how do you know that you can do all of these chores?” Mama wondered. “After all, you are only eleven years old.”

Mary felt a solid lump in her throat, like a bite of apple she couldn’t swallow. She swallowed around it and said, “I can try, Mama.”

Papa smiled at her. “Mary can do many things,” he said. “The lighthouse will show her how capable she is.”

“Please, Mama, can we stay?” Jacob begged.

“We will talk about this in the morning, children,” Mama said. She shook her finger at Papa, but Mary knew she wasn’t really angry with him because her black eyes sparkled.

The next morning Mary got up before Mama or Papa or Jacob. She tiptoed out onto the little porch with the iron railing around it. Mary listened to the screech of the gulls and watched the sun rise tie-dye the sky. She wanted to live here at Thunder Bay Island Light more than she wanted a new doll for Christmas or three best friends at school. Somehow she would convince Mama to stay. Mary hurried back inside and started to unpack a box of books. Maybe if she unpacked everything and arranged it neatly for Mama, they could stay. Maybe if she did a good job in the unpacking, mama would let her do other things with her. Mary had nearly finished unpacking the books and arranging them on the corner shelf when Mama appeared. This morning Mama wore a white shirtwaist and a long brown shirt. She had braided her hair and wound the braids around her head like a hat.

"Mama, you look like you're wearing a black hat," Mary told her.

"What are you doing, Mary?" Mama asked her.

"I'm unpacking the books and fixing them so you'll want to stay here, Mama."

Mama moved a book from one end and put it in the middle of the shelf. "These are arranged the wrong way, Mary. And pack the books back up. I don't want to stay. I won't stay here isolated from all our friends and family."

"But Mama, we can bring our friends to visit," Mary said. "And I know that Aunt Anna and Uncle Alexander will come to visit and so will the rest of the family."

Mama's black eyes flashed and she said, "Mary, why do you want to live here? It's so far away from your friends."

Mary tried to explain to Mama how much she liked the mewing of the gulls and the rocks. She tried to tell Mama how peaceful the waves lapping against the island sounded. She tried to tell Mama how much she wanted to be like her and do things as well as she did, but Mary couldn't find the right words. Mary was still trying to find words to tell Mama how much she felt a part of the lighthouse and the lake when Papa and Jacob came to breakfast.

After breakfast, Papa took the box of books and started to unpack them. He sat them on the shelf upside down and sideways. Mama laughed at him and straightened the books. "Jacob, you need a woman's touch," she said, her cheeks pink.

"Mary has the woman's touch," Papa said. "Let her help you unpack, Katie. She does a careful job."

So Mama and Mary unpacked the boxes of books. Finally Mama rocked back on her heels and dusted her skirts with her hands. "“Here! We're finished with that, Mary. And you were such a big help. I couldn't have done it by myself."

"What are you going to unpack next, Mama?"

"We will unpack nothing else," Mama said.

Mama didn't unpack the suitcases and bags. For two weeks they stood beside the door while Mama and Papa discussed the Thunder Bay Light house. Mama rowed Mary and Jacob to Alpena to shop. Mama taught Jacob to row their wooden Mackinaw boat in case she needed help on their trips to town... Mary watched Jacob and Mama row. She was sure she knew how to do it. One day she skipped ahead of Jacob in the boat and grabbed the oars before he did. "Please let me row, Mama. I watched you and Jacob and I know I can do it."

“Mary, you’re a girl. Girls don’t row boats,” Mama said.

“You’re a girl, Mama and you row a boat.”

Mama looked thoughtful. She smoothed her black hair. Finally, she said, “You may try rowing, Mary.”

Mary tried rowing. She pulled the oars in such short, choppy spurts that water splashed on Mama’s dress.

“I told you girls can’t row,” Jacob said. “Make her stop, Mama.”

Mama put her hands over Mary's. She pulled the oars in long even strokes. “You row like this, Mary,” she said. “Don’t’ worry about it. I splashed water all over Papa’s beard when I first started rowing.”

Mary kept rowing and soon she took turns with Jacob and Mama rowing the boat the twelve miles to Alpena on the mainland. On the days that the foghorn howled as mournfully as her best friend Sarah Kingsley's beagle puppy, Mama taught Mary and Jacob their lessons. She gave them spelling words while she stirred the stew on the stove or darned socks in the rocking chair.

Papa took Mary on his round of lighthouse duties and taught her how to trim the lamp wicks and fill and clean the kerosene lanterns. Mary felt older than her eleven years. Her brown hair brushed against Papa’s beard as they bent their heads over the wicks and lamps to tend the Thunder Bay Island Light. Soon, Mary’s fingers grew as nimble as Papa’s in trimming and cleaning and the other chores that they did to keep the light operating every day. Very slowly, like a snail crawling, the pile of boxes by the door grew smaller. Mama and Mary hung a

pendulum clock on the wall and pictures of sailing boats alongside it. They set green flowering plants in the windows and put the wooden rocking chair in the warm corner by the pot-bellied stove. They carefully placed chairs against the west wall, anticipating the visitors brave enough to make the trip to call at the lighthouse. But a small pile of boxes still remained by the door.

On the kitchen table close to the stove, Mama put a bowl of daisies. It was Mary's job to pick daisies and other flowers from the flower garden and arrange them in the bowl every day. Mama tightened the black iron railing that wound around the tiny tower porch, so no one would fall to the rocks far below. Mama and Mary worked so hard that only one box was left unpacked. It stood like a small island in the corner of the sitting room.

"This is a very special box," Mama told Mary and Jacob. "We will unpack it only after we have been here for two years."

"We've been here three months already, Mama," Jacob said. "Why can't we unpack it now?"

"Because I might decide to leave any day now and at least we will have one box packed," Mama said.

Papa came up behind Mama and put his hands on her shoulders. "Now, now, Katie, there will be time enough to leave. When the children are more grown, we will leave."

Mama put her hands on her hips and whirled around, her full skirts twirling with her. "I can still leave before that!" she said. But Mary hoped Mama wouldn't decide to leave. Mama was strong and brave. She would help them all live at the light.

The seasons flowed over Thunder Bay Island Light like long, smooth combers washing driftwood and shells up on the beach. Mary and Jacob grew taller with each new season. Jacob often went off by himself to sit on the rocks. Mary watched Jacob change and she fought against the changes in herself. “I want things to always stay the same. I won’t change,” Mary vowed. She walked to the mirror in the sitting room that she and Mama had nailed in place. “I will never change,” she promised the girl in the mirror.

But she kept changing, just as the waves changed. One day in November the waves slapping against the island turned into a pounding howling storm. The fierce wind blew out the light and Papa had to climb the winding stairs to light it again and again. Mary wanted to help him, but Mama stood in front of the door.

“My children aren’t going out in the storm,” she said. “Your Papa and I will do it.”

Mama and Papa took turns keeping the light lit so that ships tossing out on the waves could follow it to safety. The howling wind and soaking rain didn’t seem to bother Mama, but Papa caught a cold. He sneezed and coughed for about a week. Mary helped Mama fix hot mustard packs to put on Papa’s chest. Papa still coughed and wheezed.

“My friend Sarah Kingsley from the cabins over the hill says that her Mama makes her peppermint tea when she has a cold,” Mary told Mama.”Could we try that? Maybe peppermint tea will make Papa better.”

Mama frowned “The cabins over the hill! Those people don’t have a leaf of peppermint to spare!” Her forehead wrinkled.”My hot mustard packs usually get rid of a cold in the chest, but this time it’s staying with your Papa,” she said.

“Could we try the peppermint tea, Mama?”

“I’m not so sure that it will work,” Mama said. Mary stared at her. She looked like she had been crying.

“I can get some from Sarah tomorrow,” Mary said. “I’ll ask her right away.”

Mama sighed and walked over to the wooden corner cupboard. She pulled out a fat purse and opened it. Mary heard the jingle of coins. Mama handed her a nickel. “Give Sarah this for the peppermint leaves,” she said.

“But Mama….” Mary said.

“No buts, Mary. Give her the nickel for the peppermint leaves.”

Now Mary was sure that she saw tears in Mama’s eyes Mama must be really worried about Papa if she was crying. Mary tossed around in her bed that night like a ship on storm tossed waves. The next day as soon as she got to the Mackinaw boat that everyone on the island called the School Boat because Leander Kimball rowed them across to the mainland to school in it every day, she pushed the nickel in Sarah’s hand. I need some peppermint leaves right away,” she said.

“What’s wrong?” Sarah asked her.

Mary felt tears run down her cheeks. “My Papa’s sick with a cold and Mama wants some peppermint leaves.”

“I can run home and get some,” Sarah said. “Will you wait for me?” she asked Leander Kimball .

Leander, who had a long white beard that reminded Mary of St. Nicholas, and voice that she was sure could ho ho ho the twelve miles to the main land, spat a long brown stream of chewing tobacco into the wind whipped November Lake Huron waters. “Can’t wait too long, missy, but I can wait for ten minutes.”

“I’ll be back quicker than that.” Sarah was already running up the hill to the fishing station and the cabins alongside it.

“Chilly out here today,” Leander said. The school boat might have to quit running a week earlier than usual this year if the weather keeps up.”

“Even if you use the sails instead of the oars?” Mary asked, but she knew better. Since she had come to Thunder Bay Island she had learned about Mackinaw boats and how many of them, including the School Boat, were schooner rigged as well as carrying oars. Leander could even haul the flat bottomed Mackinaw boat unto the beach if he had to. But she had also learned about the winds and shoals off Thunder Bay Island.

Mary crossed her fingers and wished the wind away. It blew harder and smacked her across the face with her red wool scarf. “I wish the wind would go away,” Mary sighed, but she knew it would just ride the waves for a rest and return refreshed and ready for more combat.

“Winter’s coming on hard,” Leander said, peering out at her from under his shaggy white eyebrows that matched his beard which blew back and forth in the wind. “Those fisher folk are gonna have to hurry and move out or they’ll be hauling their bundles over the ice,” he said.

“What do you mean move out?” Mary’s heart gave an alarmed thud. “Where are they going?”

"The governments making them move off the island. Most of them squatted on the land where they built their cabins and the government wants it back."

"How can the government kick them off their land?" Mary asked. "They have a fishing station there and they catch lots of fish. Lots of people come to Thunder Bay Island to buy fish. How can the government do without them?"

"Seems like it's gonna try to do without every last one of them," Leander said. He shifted his weight around on the seat of the Mackinaw boat. "Your friend Sarah needs to hurry."

Mary twisted around in her seat on the Mackinaw boat and peered up the hill to the row of fishermen's cabins, but she couldn't see Sarah.

"Got to be pushing off in a minute or so," Leander announced.

Mary did what she had heard Jacob do millions of times when he wanted to call one of his friends. She put her fingers in her mouth and whistled for Sarah. She stared hard at the top of the hill, willing Sarah to appear. No one came. Mary did the next best thing. She jumped out of the Mackinaw boat and ran up the hill to Sarah's cabin.

Mary pounded on the door of Sarah's cabin. Her mother answered the door, still fastening the circle of braids that she wore around her head like a crown. "What is it, Mary? What is the matter?"

"I have to see Sarah right away," Mary panted.

"She's in the kitchen," Sarah's mother said.

Mary ran to the kitchen where Sarah was drinking a cup of tea. “Sarah, the government is going to kick you out of your cabin and off your land,” she shouted.

“I know,” Sarah said calmly. “We’re going to Sugar Island at the end of school. Here, have a cup of tea.”

“Let’s hurry and just take some leaves,” Mary said. ‘I’ll leave the nickel on the table and we can go out the back door. Then we won’t have to tell your Mama about it.”

“We can’t get out of the house without Mama knowing about it,” Sarah said.

“Why not?”

“Nosey will bark the minute he knows we’re coming.”

Mary sighed. ‘I forgot about Nosey. I guess I don’t see her often enough.”

Sarah laughed. "She likes you. The minute she sees you she barks like you are a rabbit.”

“I like her too. But why do you call her Nosey?”

“Because she is Nosey,” Sarah said. “She always has to know what’s going on and let Mama know too.”

“Nosey’s fun when I’m not in a hurry,” Mary sighed. “But today I hope she doesn’t slow things down for me. I have to run these tea leaves over to Mama.”

“I know what we can do,” Sarah said. “Let Nosey do it.”

“Nosey! Can Nosey run tea leaves?” Mary asked.

“If we tie them in a packet around her neck,” Sarah said. She tied the tea leaves in a bundle and wrapped them in a square of brown paper. Then she tied them around Nosey’s neck with a note to Mary’s mother attached. “Go find Mary’s house, Nosey she said.

Nosey ran toward the lighthouse, barking all the way. Mary and Sarah stood and waited for her to come back which she did about ten minutes later without the tea leaves or the note.

Mary hugged Nosey. “You are such a smart dog,” she said.

“Now what are we going to do with her?”Sarah said. “Go home, Nosey.”

Nosey wouldn’t go home. She followed them down the hill barking all of the way.

“At least Leander knows we’re on our way back,” Mary said.

“It’s cold out here,” Sarah said. “Hurry up!” She ran far ahead of Mary.

Mary ran after Sarah, her shoes clattering on the frozen ground. The wind whipped her skirts and she shivered and pulled her shawl more tightly over her hair.

“Sarah, it’s getting colder!” she shouted into the wind. “Why don’t you stay home? It’s going to be a stormy trip.”

“We’re in this together!” Sarah shouted back. The wind blew her long braids behind her like a flag stretching from a ship’s mast. The girls pushed against the wind and it pushed back. It roared in their ears so that they could scarcely hear anything.

Mary stopped in the middle of the path. Sarah stopped too, and the two girls stood waiting for Nosey to catch up with them. It didn’t take long. Soon Nosey came bounding out of

the bushes, her Beagle nose twitching at the new and wonderful smells. Her brown and white fur was spotted with dried leaves, but she looked happy. She ran up and licked Mary's hand.

"Nosey, go home," Sarah said. She stomped her foot and advanced toward Nosey. Nosey yawned and sat down on Mary's foot.

"I don't think she's going home," Mary told Sarah.

"We'll just have to take her with us," Sarah said.

Nosey trotted alongside the girls and finally they reached Leander Kimball's Mackinaw boat.

"Get yourselves in here young un's, "Leander shouted above the wind. "We got to get to the mainland while the getting's good."

"It looks stormy out there," Sarah said.

Gathering their long skirts up around their ankles, the two girls climbed into the boat. Nosey stood at the end of the pier barking so loud that they could hear her above the wind.

"Go home, Nosey!" Sarah shouted, but Nosey just sat on the edge of the pier and barked. Soon the barking changed to howling. Mary couldn't stand it any longer. She climbed out of the boat, picked up Nosey, and climbed back into the boat with a squirming Nosey under her arm. She put Nosey on the bottom of the boat and covered her with a blanket she found there. "Be quiet, Nosey," she said.

Nosey put her head under the blanket and went to sleep. Mary tried to arrange her skirts more comfortably.

"I don't see why we can't wear overalls like Jacob does," Mary grumbled. "It would make rowing a boat and climbing stairs a lot easier."

Jacob and another boy Andrew hooted. 'Girls wear overalls!"

Sarah gasped. "Girls wear overalls! My Mama wouldn't let me wear overalls."

The other girls in the boat gasped, especially Carrie Jacobs. "Why would I want to wear overalls," she said, smoothing the skirt of her stiffly starched calico dress.

"I don't think my Mama would let me wear overalls either, but I would like to try," Mary said.

Leander dipped the oars in the choppy water and pulled the boat away from the dock. "Not so sure this is a good idea," he said. "We'll see once we're in the channel. Maybe I'll turn back."

Leander didn't have to turn back. As suddenly as the wind had come, it died down and the wind driven snowflakes melted into the water. "Just a squall," Leander muttered, pulling harder on the oars. Suddenly, he bent over and went into a fit of coughing. "Let me row," Mary said.

Leander was coughing so hard that he couldn't answer her. But he moved over and Mary took the oars and started rowing.

"You can't row," Carrie said. "Let Jacob row."

"I thought you said you didn't know how to row," Sarah said.

“I’ve been practicing with Papa,” Mary said. “He thinks it’s important for both me and Jacob to know how to row.”

“Let me row,” Jacob said, shoving Mary off the seat.

Mary shoved him and got back on the seat. “I’m rowing,” Mary said. She pulled harder on the oars. She tried not to think about how much her arms ached, but she couldn’t help it. They felt like she had rocks tied to her shoulders. She gritted her teeth and kept rowing, but the rocks got heavier and heavier. Finally, Mary turned to Sarah. “Do you think you could row for awhile?”

Sarah looked over at Leander who seemed to be sleeping, and then she moved to Mary’s seat. “I’ve watched Papa row, but he would never let me try” she said. She took hold of the oars like they were hot coals from the stove. She moved the oars in opposite directions and the boat moved in circles.

Mary couldn’t help laughing, even though Sarah was her best friend. She leaned over and took the oars from Sarah. “This is how you row,” she said. “Long, smooth, even strokes. Use your wrists.”

She and Sarah rowed together. Mary closed her eyes and kept rowing. Nosey woke up and started howling. “Haven’t you ever told her that dogs are supposed to bark, not howl?” Mary asked Sarah. “And why didn’t you teach her how to row?”

“I see the mainland, “Carrie said. “We’re safe.”

“We weren’t safe the entire trip with girls rowing,” Jacob said. “I was so scared I couldn’t say anything!”

Leander had woken up from his nap and he pulled the Mackinaw boat up on the beach. They sat Nosey on the sand, because she kept running to the bottom of the boat and burrowing under a blanket. Nosey pulled at Sarah's skirt, then at Mary's, trying to get them to get back in the boat. Mary grabbed Nosey and tucked her under her arm. The children climbed a wooden set of stairs that led up the hill to the school. "We'll have to think of a place to put Nosey when we get there," Mary thought.

Miss Bennett stood in the doorway of the wooden schoolhouse, waiting for them. Her smile stretched across her face and welcomed them. "I didn't think you island children would make it today," she said. "It's a good thing that Leander is a good oarsman."

"It's a good thing that Mary is a good oarswoman," Sarah said.

Miss Bennett looked puzzled and her smile faded when she saw Nosey. "Why did you bring your dog to school, Sarah?'

Everyone took their seats while Sarah told Miss Bennett the story and Mary got a towel and dried off Nosey in front of the stove.

Then Mary remembered what Leander had told her. "Kate, are you going away?" she blurted out into the middle of the room. "And what's a squatter?"

Kate couldn't answer. She just hung her head.

Miss Bennett answered for her. She walked over to the map table and pulled out a book. This is an 1846 gazetteer she said. Jacob, read the number of settlers on Thunder Bay Island.

Jacob read. "It says 160 settlers live on Thunder Bay Island," he said.

“What do they do for a living?”Miss Bennett asked him.

Jacob read again. “They fish he said. Many of them have fishing boats which are small Mackinaw boats and they take their fish to the fishing station.”

“How much fish do they catch a year?” Miss Bennett asked.

“The total catch is supposed to be about 12,000 barrels of fish a year,” Jacob read.

Miss Bennett’s voice was cold and angry. “And what is the federal government going to do with these fishermen?”

“The government thinks the lighthouse keepers should be the only ones living on the island because it says that they don’t own the land. They are just squatting on it.”

Mary couldn’t believe it. The government was making Sarah and her family move.

“But Sarah’s not a squatter,” she said. “She lives here and her father fishes every day. “

Miss Bennett’s voice was still as cold as Lake Huron ice. “The government isn’t always right,” she said.

As soon as Leander pulled the boat up onto the island, Mary jumped out without even saying goodbye to Kate and burst into the lighthouse. She was sure she knew what to do about squatters. Kate and her family could live at the lighthouse, and then they wouldn’t be squatters any longer.

Mary burst into the kitchen. “Mama! You’ve got to help Sarah and her family!”

Mama wasn’t in the kitchen. “Mama!” Mary hollered.

“I’m in here.” Mama’s voice came from her and papa’s bedroom.

Mary hurried into Papa and Mama’s bed room. Mama was helping him drink a cup of t ea, but he could only sip a few swallows between coughs.

Mama looked at Mary. “I have to take him to the doctor on the mainland. He’s getting worse.”

“Jacob and I will help you,” Mary said.

“You and Jacob can help me wrap Papa up and get him into the boat. But then Jacob and I will make the trip to Alpena. You need to stay here and tend the light while I’m gone.”

“I want to go with Papa.”

“You can best help by staying here,” Mama said. “I’m depending on you, Mary and so are the people who need the light.”

Mary and Jacob helped Mama wrap papa in wool blankets. They walked him from the bedroom to the kitchen door. Mary opened the door and they pushed out into the wind. It felt like they were swimming in air. They half-pushed and half-walked Papa down to the rowboat. Mama spread a heavy rug and blankets on the bottom of the boat and Papa lay down, still coughing. Mama tucked the blankets tightly under Papa’s chin so the fierce wind wouldn’t whip them away.

“I’m taking him to the hospital in Alpena,” Mama said. “Remember that you are in charge of things, Mary. You must light the lamp tonight. I know that you’ll do the same job that I would. Jacob and I will be back tomorrow morning.”

Mary felt a lump like a pearl in her throat.

“But Papa,” she said thickly.

“I’m counting on you, Mary.”

The lump in her throat dissolved to a grain of sand Mama thought that she would do a good job of being in charge. Mary hugged Mama. “I will take care of things, Mama. I’ll light the lamp.”

Jacob took the seat in the boat across from Mama and Mama began to row away. Mary stood on the porch waving and watching them until the boat was out of sight. The wind howled and the air felt empty and strange. She went inside and closed the door. The silence surged to cover her up like the warm summer waves did when she went swimming. She sat in the rocking chair by the stove and rocked back and forth in time to the clock’s pendulum. It would take Mama a little longer to row to Alpena because of the storm. Mama and Jacob and Papa would reach Alpena safely, they just had to. Mary’s thoughts tumbled like the storm tossed waves. Would the doctor be able to make Papa get better?

Mary sighed and wished that Sarah and Nosey were there with her in the lighthouse.

She heard a scratching at the door and she rushed to open it. Nosey stood there wagging her tail. Mary bent down and unfastened the note from her collar. Sarah had sent more peppermint leaves for Papa and Mrs. Kingsley had added a line asking if she could help. Mary quickly went to Papa’s wooden desk for a pen and scratched a note asking Sarah to come and spend the night with her. She gave nose a pat on the head and promised her a biscuit if she brought Sarah back with her. Mary watched Nosey disappear into the twilight.

It was almost time to light the lamp but she could sit in Papa's rocker until then. Mary rocked. Mary rocked and rocked until it seemed like she would rock until Mama and Jacob and Papa came home. Suddenly, she heard the tinkle of broken glass. She ran upstairs to the lantern room. The wind had blown so hard that it shattered a pane of glass and the curtains were blowing around it.

"They're rowing home and there's no light," Mary said to the wind. Mama and Papa and Jacob can't row up the light path like I did if there isn't a light path. Mary rushed downstairs. She pulled a thick quilt from her bed. She rummaged in Papa's tools and got a hammer and wooden pegs. She ran back upstairs, waving the hammer in front of her. It was almost dusk and she couldn't see too clearly, but she managed to nail the quilt over the broken window pane. The wind filled the quilt like a sail and it billowed out, but Mary's nailing had been sound and it held. Mary gave the wooden pegs a few more thumps with the hammer, and then she let the lamp. She stood watching the lamp anxiously. Was it her imagination or had the flame flickered? She watched closely, like Sarah's cat watched the mouse hole in their kitchen.

"Papa, you and Mama and Jacob will be safe now," she said. "You can see the light now and row up the light path. You won't hit any rocks or shoals and sink under the waves."

Usually after the lamp was lit, Mary or Mama or Papa or Jacob went back downstairs. Mary started to climb back down the stairs. She shivered and said, "It's cold tonight. I'm going to sleep in front of the stove."

She climbed down seven more steps. Then she stopped and looked back over her shoulder at the light. It was still burning, but was the flame steady or was it flickering? Mary stood, staring at the light. Then she hurried down to the kitchen and grabbed Papa's rocking

chair. Luckily it wasn't too heavy to drag up the stairs. Step by step, Mary wrestled the rocking chair up to the tower room and sat it in front of the light. She eased into the chair and began to rock. She stared at the light. She had to make sure it kept burning.

Mary rocked and watched the light for awhile. Then she got up and looked over the rail at the cold dark waters boiling below her. "I'm afraid," she said to herself. "For the first time since we came to live here, I'm afraid.

"Papa will be better soon, I know he will," she told the wind.

She seemed to hear Jacob's voice in the wind. "Girls are always afraid," he said scornfully like he always did when they sat up here and she wanted to go back downstairs because they were so high above the waves.

"Girls aren't either always afraid," Mary said out loud. "They are just afraid sometimes, like boys. I'm afraid now, but I'm going to watch the light."

The wind flapped the quilt so loudly that Mary couldn't think anymore. She sat and rocked and rocked, watching the light. All night she rocked and watched the light. Finally, the sunlight filtering through the quilt told her that morning had come. Mary jumped from the rocking chair and lugged it downstairs. The fire had gone out in the stove. She hurried to rebuild it. Papa would need a warm house to come home to and some hot peppermint tea. The teapot was whistling and Mary was eating a bowl of porridge for breakfast, and the room sent out waves of warmth when Mary heard Nosey bark. She threw open the door and Nosey and Sarah stood in the doorway.

Mary pulled Sarah into the room. “The window blew out in the tower, but I climbed up and fixed it and I kept the light burning all night. Mama and Papa and Jacob aren’t back yet. Sarah, I was so scared. Do you ever get scared?”

Sarah looked around as if she were making sure that none of the kids from school could hear her. “I get scared too. I’m scared of moving, but Papa and Mama say we have to move.”

“I wanted us to live here and things to be always the same,” Mary said. “Now I’m afraid things will change. What will happen if Papa doesn’t get better? What will happen when you go away?”

“You will be strong like the wind and the waves,” Sarah said. “And I will try to be.”

Mary and Sarah and Nosey spent two more nights in the lighthouse before Mama and Jacob returned. Mama looked sunken and small and Jacob sad and tired.

Mama’s voice was quiet and flat. “Papa is in the cemetery on Winslow Hill,” Mama said. She walked over to the cupboard and took the porcelain figurine off the top shelf. “It’s time to pack and leave.”

For the rest of that day Mama packed things into barrels and bales and stacked them up. Mrs. Kingsley and Sarah and Nosey came to the light house to help them. Mary tried to give Mama a cup of tea and some toast for lunch. Mama stared at her fiercely. “You help me pack,” she said. “We’re leaving this island.”

Nosey whined and Sarah burst into tears. Soon, Sarah and Mrs. Kingsley and Nosey left.

“Hurry with the packing,” Mama said fiercely. “Hurry!”

“Mama, can’t we stay? Papa loved it here.”

Mama didn’t even pause in her packing. “We’re leaving this place where your Papa got sick,” she said.

The days after Papa died blurred together. Every evening when Jacob and Mary got home from school, Mama put their supper on the table, and then she disappeared. The first day that Mama had disappeared, Mary and Jacob searched all over until they found Mama at the porthole in the tower, gazing in the direction of Alpena. Mama pointed, “Papa’s grave is over there,” she whispered. But Mama never visited Papa’s grave or took Jacob and Mary to visit it. She just left the light to tend the nearby buoys.

Now one night in the week and often on the weekends, Mary went with Mama on her nightly rounds. Mama spent most of the night in the watch room because the light couldn’t burn all night without some tending. Every three hours or so, Mama had to have a new, freshly filled set of kerosene lamps with sparkling chimneys and well trimmed wicks in operation or the light would go out. T he clockwork that drove the rotating lens had to be rewound or the light would stop flashing. When fog suddenly blanketed everything, Mama had to climb down to the engine room in the cellar and start the engine that ran the foghorn.

At sunrise, Mama blew out the light and drew the blinds that sheltered the lens from the sun’s rays. She slept until it was time to get Mary and Jacob off to school. Sometimes Mary would get up early and blow out the light for Mama. One morning Mama touched Mary’s cheek. “You’re a big help, Mary. I am so afraid without Papa.”

Mary hugged Mama. “I’m afraid without Papa too. But we have to live somewhere. Can’t we live here and have a dog like Nosey? Nosey and Sarah helped me keep the light burning the night Papa died.”

“We won’t life here,” Mama said, staring toward Alpena.

On weekends, Mary and Jacob helped Mama get the light ready for the next night’s work and keep everything spotless. On school days, Mama usually napped before or after lunch, and finished more routine work until it was time for Jacob and Mary to come home from school. After supper and homework and time together, once again Mama climbed the stairs to begin another night of work on the light.

For many months after Papa died, the unpacked boxes stood in the middle of the kitchen. Mary and Jacob got used to stepping around them. Jacob found a half-empty box and kept some of his rocks and fishing lures in it.

Then one day Mary came home from school coughing just like Papa had coughed before Mama and Jacob took him away to Staten Island. “Mary, Mary, quite contrary!” Mama said when she heard Mary cough. “What will become of you with that cough?”

She hurried Mary in front of the stove and made her drink a cup of hot peppermint tea. Then she wrapped a strip of flannel around Mary's throat and made her eat a tablespoon full of honey. Nothing helped. Mary’s cold grew worse and worse and turned into diphtheria. Mama got a worried look in her black eyes and new creases in her forehead. She sent Jacob to stay with Sarah’s family so that he wouldn’t get sick too. For a few weeks, Mary didn’t know anything but burning heat worse than the stove gave off and a black whirlpool where she bobbed up and down

like a cork. One night, she thought she saw Papa come out of the flames from the stove. Papa walked over to her and put a cool hand on her forehead. “Papa, I’m afraid,” Mary whispered.

“Don’t be afraid,” Papa told her. “I’m watching over you and Mama and Jacob. Sleep Mary, and get well.”

After that, Mary started to get better and stay awake more every day. One day she felt well enough to start going with Mama on her lighthouse rounds again. Mary was sitting by the stove drinking peppermint tea when Mama pushed the table back so hard that it hit the pile boxes in the middle of the kitchen floor. They swayed back and forth like a tall ship’s mast in a storm.

Mama frowned. “Tomorrow we’ll start looking for a place to live in Alpena. We need to pack up the rest of our things.”

Mary’s heart sank. How could she stand one more change in her world shattered with changes? A tear ran down her cheek and splashed on her hand. Mama didn’t even notice. She was too busy looking around the room, packing it with her eyes. “We’ll go shopping tomorrow for some overalls to wear while we’re working,” Mama said. “We need to save our dresses for fancier living on the mainland.”

Mary swallowed so hard that she choked over a mouthful of tea. “Mama, I don’t want to go back to the mainland. Can’t we stay here? I feel close to Papa here.”

Mama squared her shoulders ad wiped the corner of her eyes with her apron. “Mary, moving is best for all of us, so don’t argue with me. I’m going to start packing. You can do light chores like handing me those books over in the corner.”

Mary stood with her back to the window, handing her mother the books. She watched Mama put them neatly in the box, remembering how Papa had laughed with them when they had unpacked them. Papa had loved her and now he was gone. Jacob loved her but never showed it. Mary knew that Mama loved her but why didn't love keep things solid? Why did everything change?

Through her whirl of thoughts, Mary realized that Mama was talking to her. "Mary, let's finish here. We have lots of other things to pack."

Mary hurried and got ahead of her mother packing the books. While Mama caught up, Mary looked out of the setting room window at the waves restlessly tossing and turning on the rocks. Mary saw a three –masted schooner laboring against the strong winds as it threaded its way along the shoals.

"Look at that schooner, Mama. That's how I feel about living on the mainland, Mama. I want to live here where I can wear overalls and have a dog like Nosey. I want to live here where Papa lived."

Mama sighed. "I know how you feel about change Mary, but sometimes it's for the best. You'll see that after you get used to it. Now tell me, what color of overalls would you like to buy today?"

"I don't want any overalls," Mary mumbled. All of the excitement she had originally felt about being the only girl in school to wear overalls was gone. She didn't want to be the first girl to wear overalls if they had to move away from the lighthouse. No pair of overalls, no matter what color, was worth moving away from the light.

Mama and Mary and Jacob got into their Mackinaw boat. Mary sat listening to the mewing of the sea gulls and the waves slapping against the boat. If they lived on the mainland, she would have to listen to sea sounds from shore and not from the lighthouse. This would change the whole sound for her. Then Mary heard Nosey barking and suddenly Sarah was climbing into the boat.

"What are you doing here?" Mary asked her.

Mama smiled. "I asked her to come. I didn't ask Nosey, but here she is."

"You're not getting the same color of overalls that I am," Jacob told Mary.

"Overalls! You're getting overalls?" Sarah asked Mary.

Mary tried to feel glad but she didn't. "I'm getting overalls," she said. "I miss Papa." Mary said.

Nosey barked.

"Life without your Papa would be easier for us on the mainland," Mama said.

"Where are we going shopping, Mama? Are we there yet?" Jacob asked.

"We're going to Herschals and we aren't even close yet," Katie told him. She handed him an oar. "Take a turn rowing and we'll get there faster."

Mama rowed some more and then Mary and Jacob rowed.

When Sarah' turn came, Jacob stuck out his tongue at her. "You can't row," he teased her. "You'll sink the boat."

Sarah moved over beside him on the seat. “I’ll show you who can row the best. Give me the oars!”

Jacob handed Sarah the oars and she rowed the boat closer to Alpena. Then Katie took over again. She smiled at Sarah. “You did a fine job, Sarah, but we’re getting close to the landing dock and it gets tricky around there. You can row part of the way back, too.”

Mama rowed them up to the Alpena dock. Mary and Sarah and Jacob helped her tie up the rowboat. Then they all walked to the trolley stop to wait for the horse-drawn trolley car that would take them downtown to Herschals.

“Mama, are you sure about the overalls?” Mary asked as they climbed aboard and settled on the hard wooden seats.

“Mrs. Matthews do you think I could have a pair of overalls, too?” Sarah asked.

Mama looked around. “Where’s Jacob? He was right behind us.”

“He’s outside putting our nickels in the fare box,” Sarah said. “He’s dropping them in one by one so he can talk to the conductor and watch the horses. He wanted me to help him, but I‘ll see all of the horses I want to see on the farm we’re moving to.

Jacob finally came into the car, banging the door behind him. “Mama, the driver said I could sit beside him. Can I Mama, please?”

“It won’t do any harm,” Mama said.

“Mama, what color of overalls will we buy?” Mary asked.

“Mine will be green like your Papa’s,” Mama told her.

“Why don’t you wear Mr. Matthew’s overalls?” Sarah asked.

Mama laughed. “I tried to wear them, but they were big enough for three of me!!”

“I would like pink overalls,” Sarah said.

Mama laughed. “They most likely won’t have pink, Sarah. They don’t even make them for girls, so they won’t be in girl’s colors like pink.”

“Then I’ll take blue,” Sarah declared. “What about you, Mary?”

“I’ll wait until we get there and see what colors they do have,” Mary answered her.

They trolley swayed and clattered and it was finally time to get off. Mama squared her shoulders and wrinkled her nose. “This is a noisy city,” she complained. She said something else, but Mary couldn’t hear her. The wagon wheels clattering over the cobblestone streets made too much noise. The clusters of people, more people than Mary could count, made too much noise.

“They’re more people here than sea gulls in Thunder Bay!” Mama complained.

Mary wrinkled her nose. “Phew! I smell horses and garbage!” she said.

Sarah wrinkled her nose right alongside of Mary.”I like the way the horses smell, but the garbage is stinky!”

Mama grabbed Jacob’s arms as he dashed by after the horses.

“Mama, I’m too old for you to hold on to!” Jacob shouted.

Mama didn’t answer him. She just took hold of his hand on one side and held on to Mary’s hand on the other side. Sarah clutched Mary’s elbow. They wove their way through the

crowds of people clustered like sea gulls around a crust of bread. They walked up and down wooden sidewalks. Jacob and Mary and Sarah stared at the buildings. Jacob read some of the signs out loud. “Sawyer’s Mercantile. Mason’s Grocery.”

Mary stood clinging to Sarah’s hand, her mouth open in amazement. “Mama, some of these buildings are as tall as our lighthouse!”

Mama smiled. “Maybe some of them are, but our lighthouse can stand on its own.”

“Mama, are we at the store yet?” Jacob said.

Mama smiled. “You mean Herschals and I think it’s just around this corner, if I remember well, Jacob.”

Mama had remembered well. They turned the corner and there stood a tall building with a sign in front that said, “Herschal’s General Store. Peppermint Candy, 1 penny.

“Mrs. Walker, what’s peppermint candy?” Sarah asked.

“Think of your peppermint tea leaves as being solid and covered with a sugar coating and you get the idea of peppermint candy,” Katie told her.

“I want some peppermint candy!” Jacob shouted so loudly that a passing lady in a fur coat and hat with an ostrich feather sniffed at him.

“After we do our shopping I’ll buy you some,” Katie said. She sniffed back at the lady and Sarah and Mary giggled behind their hands.

“Your Mama’s funny”Sarah whispered to Mary.

Mama bought Jacob a warm coat with a flannel lining. She bought Jacob a pair of trousers that reached down to his ankles. Jacob stuck out his chest. “I’m too old to wear knickers, now,” he bragged.

“You need to keep warm so you won’t catch cold like Papa did, “Katie told him.

“When is it my turn?” Mary whispered to Mama.

“Now, it’s your turn,” Mama said out loud.

She turned to the sales girl and asked to see the overalls. The sales girl smiled at Jacob. “The gentleman would probably like a blue pair. They wear well.”

Mama smiled at the sales girl. “The overalls aren’t for him. They are for me and my two lady friends here. I would like to try on a green pair. What color would you like, Mary? Sarah, didn’t you already tell me you wanted blue?”

The sales girl stood staring at them, her mouth open like a fish.

“I want to try on a red pair, please,” Mary said. She tried them on and kept them on. “I’m wearing them home,” she said.

“I’ll try a blue pair,” Sarah said. She tried them on and kept them on. “I’ll talk Mama into them. When she sees how nice they look on me she’ll let me wear them,” she said. “And wait until Nosey sees them.”

“Don’t forget my green overalls,” Mama told the sales girl. “I’ll wear mine home, too”

By the time they had found overalls to fit, the clerks had lit the kerosene lamps in the store.

Mama took some money out of her pocket book and handed it to the sales girl. “We’ll wear them home,” she said.

“Mama, it’s getting dark. We’ll have to light our lamp in the boat,” Jacob said.

“We’ll light the lamp,” Mama told him. “You can hold it all of the way home.”

“Why doesn’t Mary have to hold it too?” Jacob whined.

“You will take turns,” Mama said. “Now, let’s hurry home.”

They hurried until they passed the candy counter on the way out. Then Jacob stopped at stared at the chewing gum and Mary and Sarah stared at the peppermint drops. When they left Herschal’s General Store, Mama and Sarah and Mary were sucking peppermint drops and Jacob was chewing and popping his chewing gum. By the time they got back to the park where the rowboat was tied up, the sun was sinking low in the sky over the tops of the buildings. Mama lit the lantern in the boat and handed it to Jacob. Mary laughed and nudged Sarah. “He can’t yell because he has his mouth full of gum. Ha, ha, Jacob!”

Jacob blew a chewing gum bubble at them and popped it in Mary’s face.

Sarah pointed to what looked like a black, skinny finger poking up into the sky. “What’s that, Mrs. Matthews? It looks like a skeleton’s finger.”

“That’s the Baptist Church. It’s one of the tallest buildings in Alpena.”

“Mama, can I row first?” Mary asked.

“I’ll get us out in the water and then you can take a turn,” Mama said.

Mama rowed slowly and they watched the pinpoints of light as they pulled away from the shore. They all watched the lights winking like fireflies and listened to the water slapping against the sides of the boat. After a long time, Sarah said, “I don’t see so many lights now and I don’t hear the horse’s hoofs clattering on the cobblestones anymore.”

“I don’t smell the horses anymore either,” Mary said. “Now all I can smell is the lake.”

“Mama, I’m tired of holding the lantern,” Jacob complained.

Mama gave Jacob the oars and Mary the lantern. Jacob rowed for what seemed like ten minutes to Mary. “Mama, I’m tired of rowing,” he complained.

“Mama, make him stop complaining,” Mary said.

“I’ll row, Mrs. Matthews,” Sarah said. Mama nodded at Sarah. “You can row to your dock, Sarah. Stop complaining, Jacob,” she said.

Jacob curled up in the corner of the boat and went to sleep with a peppermint in each hand. Mary sat in the bow of the boat holding the lantern so that Mama could see to steer. The oars made cranking sounds and the waves slapped against the sides of the boat. Jacob opened one eye and asked sleepily, “Are we home yet?” But he didn’t wake up enough to help row the boat or hold the lantern.

He didn’t even wake up when they bumped up against the dock on Thunder Bay Island. “Jacob, wake up!” Mary yelled.

“Mary, not so loud,” Mama said. “You’ll wake everyone on Alpena instead of Jacob.

Sarah jangled the brass clips on her overall straps against the tin lantern.

“That sounds like a ship’s bell,” Mary laughed.

The sound didn’t wake Jacob. He didn’t even stir.

“Why can’t he get up and hold the lantern for awhile?” Mary grumbled.

“Let him sleep,” Mama said. “You and your new red overalls can hold the lantern. The light reflects off of them and I can see better.”

Mary’s eyes kept feeling heavier and heavier and she had to rub them to keep them from closing. Mama was counting on her to hold the lantern steady so they could get home safety.

“I’ll help you Mary,” Sarah said taking the lantern from her and swinging it high.

They took turns holding the lantern. “You’re not a squatter,” Mama said to Sarah. You’ve worked hard to live here. I’ve been the squatter.”

They drew nearer to Thunder Bay Island where the waves restlessly tossed and turned on the rocks. Holding the lantern straight out in front of her, Mary saw a dark shape that was too big to be a rock.

“Mama, it’s a boat!” Mary shouted so loudly that this time Jacob did wake up. It was the same three masted schooner that Mary had seen before they had left for the mainland that morning. This time it hung on the reef like Jacob hung his coat up on the iron hook beside the kitchen stove.

The boat‘s distress whistle woke Jacob.

“Mama, the boat looks like it’s going to sink,” Jacob said.

“Mama, what will happen to the people on the boat?” Mary asked.

“Don’t worry about them. We’ll rescue them,” Mama said.

Mama rowed faster. They drew closer and in the lantern light, Mary saw a man thrashing in the water. She pointed. “Mama, he’s over there!” she shouted.

Gritting her teeth and tightening the iron clasp on her overalls, Mama rowed even faster and they drew up beside the man. “Now, how am I going to get hold of him and make it stick?” Mama wondered out loud.

“We can use the chewing gum, Mama,” Mary said.

Mama looked puzzled. “Chewing gum?” Then she remembered. “Chewing gum!”

Mama took a piece of gum and put it on her fingers. She reached out and grabbed the man while Mary held the lantern steady so she could see. The chewing gum was sticky enough to hold the man so Mama could pull him into the boat. Mary and Jacob and Sarah helped Mama pull him in.

The man sat in the bottom of the boat shivering. He gasped, “We have to find Scotty!”

“Where did you see him last?” Katie asked the man.

“He was swimming beside me,” the man said.

Mary shone the lantern out on the water again. “Mama, I see something over there!”

Mama rowed over to a brown blob in the water. The brown blob whined.

“Mama, it’s a dog. Scotty’s a dog!” Jacob shouted.

The shaggy brown dog started to drift away from the boat. Quickly, Jacob caught him between the oars. Just as quickly Scotty slipped between them and landed back in the water with a splash.

Quickly Mama put more of the sticky chewing gum on the oars and fished for Scotty. This time Scotty's hair stuck to the chewing gum and the chewing gum stuck to the oars. Jacob and Mama lifted him into the boat.

"Hello, Scotty," Mary said.

Scotty shivered and shook all over. Water sprayed from his shaggy hair. Mary loosened the metal fastener on her overalls and put him inside of them to get warm. She held the lantern with one hand for the rest of the way home.

Mama rowed hard and they washed up on the beach at the foot of the light tower. They all hurried into the warm kitchen.

"Mary, fix everyone some peppermint tea. Jacob, come and help me with the light," Mama said. She was already halfway up the stairs. Mary heated water in the teakettle and made the man a hot cup of peppermint tea. He sat drinking the tea and drying his clothes.

Mary took Scotty out of her overalls and sat him by the stove. He was still shivering so hard that his shaggy hair rippled like waves. Mary had an idea. She hurried to the stove and poured some peppermint tea in a saucer. She sat it down in front of Scotty. "Drink some of this. It will help you get warm," she said. Scotty lapped some tea. Soon, he stopped shivering.

By the time Mama and Jacob climbed back down from lighting the light, the sailor could talk. He told them that his name was Billy Bud Harrison. “Some of the boys didn’t want to keep Scotty on board the ship. They said that he was bad luck. I guess he was. Here we are!”

“He was good luck,” Mary said. “He kept you floating and he kept floating himself, didn’t he?”

Billy Bud looked thoughtful. “You’re right young miss. But, I don’t even have a ship to keep him on any more.”

Mary petted Scotty. Then she looked at Mama. “You know I can do things now, Mama. I’ll take care of him.”

Mama sat Scotty on the top of the stack of boxes in the kitchen. “We’ll keep Scotty. He can start to earn his keep by helping us unpack!”

Christian Island Light, Georgian Bay, Ontario

Mrs. Walker of Mitchell says the Stratford Herald has received a glove belonging to her daughter who was lost with the ill fated Waubuno. It was picked up on an island, but this is the

only article out of a large outfit that has been found…The keeper of the light house at Christian Island was possibly the last person to see the Waubuno steaming through the waters of Georgian Bay.

This story happened in imagination.

The Doctor's Bride and a Mother's Voyage

Karen Blaine sat here at her oak roll top desk in the library which had been sitting in the same since Sarah was born. She and James had decorated this room and the rest of their house together and after he died when Sarah was eight years old, Karen couldn't change any of the detail of the library from the lace curtains at the window and the crimson cushions in the window seat where Sarah used to lay for hours reading. The floor to ceiling book shelves that James had built crowded the walls and the two upholstered couches that they both had positioned in front of the fireplace looked warm and inviting and crimson! The upholstery was so squishy that their small terrier Ian daily dove deep into it and disappeared. The fire that Karen lit everyday in the fireplace reflected on the polished wooden floor in front of the andirons. After James died Karen covered the rest of the hardwood floor with a braided rug because she kept seeing his reflection in it since he brought back the wood from Europe and fashioned the planks for the floor himself.

Karen's eyes roamed lovingly over the oak roll top desk which was cluttered with newspaper clippings, notes, official findings, letters of condolence and a white glove that had belonged to Sarah. The man had given it to her as she showed him out the door this morning, and Karen clasped it to her heart, unable to let it go any more than she could let go of Sarah. The water had washed away any traces of Sarah's perfume, but Karen put it to her lips and clasped it

to her heart on the chance that she could capture an elusive trace of Sarah's scent, a fleeting glimpse of her face.

Her fingers tightened around the white glove in white despair. Sarah had gone to be with James and all she had left was an empty house saturated with their memories and their lives.

James and Karen had immigrated to Mitchell, a farming community located on the Thames River in Southern Ontario in August 1848, right after they were married. He, being a skilled carpenter, had a vocation waiting for him before they arrived and they quickly built and furnished their house, working around the long hours of his job. Sarah was born in May 1849 when the apple trees bloomed and birds sang outside their bedroom window.

"She's a beauty," James beamed as he sat beside their bed. "I pray that she has a long and prosperous life."

"I pray that we have the same," Karen told him, patting him with one hand and holding Sarah in the crook of my arm with the other hand.

"She's got black hair just like you do," James purred, brushing back the hair from Karen's forehead.

"She has your eyes," Karen said gently.

Sarah continued to have Jim's eyes all of the years that she was growing up.

Sarah also acquired her father's gentle disposition and she helped James in his woodworking shop. She would pick up chips and sand and polish wood items for James. James also took Sarah in his row boat and canoe out on the Thames and taught her how to swim, row, and paddle. They often begged Karen to come with them and she did occasionally, but she didn't

enjoy the water as much as Sarah and James did. Sometimes Karen had a strange foreboding as she watched Sarah and James set off on their canoeing trips. Sarah also spent time with Karen and learned to cook and sew. On her own she developed a love of reading and learning new things every day.

Karen had just turned eight when James and some friends went on a fishing trip to Lighthouse Cove further on down the Thames River. James did not return from his fishing trip. Something, she never did learn what, caused their boat to capsize and spill everyone in the water. Being a good swimmer, James could have reached the shore, but he instead he chose to rescue two of his friends before he sank under the waves from exhaustion. They brought his body home to Karen. She sighed and hugged Sarah's glove tighter, the same way she had hugged James, trying to breathe her will, her life into him. Her life and will did not bring James back to life, so for several years she entwined her life as intricately as her morning glory vines twined themselves into together and climbed the side of the house outside of the library window.

Then gradually Sarah eased out of Karen's life and into her own, acquiring an education and obtaining a teaching post in the school where she had once been a student. Sarah was well on her way to becoming a spinster school teacher.

"I don't see what's wrong with Thomas McKinstry. He did ask for my permission to marry you," Karen said to Sarah one afternoon over a cup of tea.

"Mama, There's nothing wrong with Thomas except that I don't love him," Sarah smiled. She smiled and said the same thing about several other young men in the village as the years slipped by and Karen began to think that perhaps she and Sarah would grow old together in the

house that she and James built. After she turned down her latest proposal, Sarah smiled. “Don’t worry Mama, I won’t mind being a spinster with you.

Karen couldn’t help smiling back despite the declining possibility of grandchildren. She so loved this young woman who by some miracle was her daughter and a beautiful one. In Sarah’s face, her father’s eyes were smaller and closer together, but just as blue and fringed by thick black lashes. On Sarah, Karen’s black hair had grown long and lustrous with a blue-black sheen that set off the whiteness of her skin. Even in summer when Sarah canoed and rowed a boat on the river like her father had taught her, her skin remained white or burned. “I wish Dad had given me his ability to tan,” Sarah often mourned. But sunburned or not, Sarah was beautiful on the outside and to Karen’s delight, on the inside as well. Karen felt well pleased and blessed with her daughter and even though she wanted grandchildren, she was equally as happy to cherish Sarah by herself.

Then in 1878 along came Dr. Allen Wilson and both Karen and Sarah’s world shifted as dramatically as the wind on Georgian Bay. In the beginning Sarah just dropped hints like bread crumbs leading to the witches cottage in the forest of Hansel and Gretel. Then Karen began to notice that Sarah went out more on weekends instead of staying home quietly reading or playing the piano or taking long walks in the woods. One evening at their dinner table Karen asked her daughter if she were dining with anyone special at her mysterious dinners out and Sarah had smiled at her with her father’s blue eyes. “I most certainly am dining with someone special tonight. I’m dining with my mother.”

Karen’s appreciation of her sense of humor outweighed her curiosity about Sarah’s new friend and she laughed so hard that she knocked the dinner rolls off the table. Sarah bent to help

her pick them up and the knocked them on the floor again. As they knocked heads picking up the dinner rolls, they both laughed until they had to wipe tears from their eyes. “Allen and I did the same thing the other night,” Sarah gasped.

The tone in her voice caused Karen to snap upright in her chair. “Are you going to marry him?” she asked Sarah from some place deep within herself that she hadn’t realized was there.

“Yes, mama, I told him I would marry him last night.”

Karen’s voice sounded hoarse to her ears. “Will you live in Mitchell?”

“No, Mama, Allen is going to open a practice with his friend Ned in Lancaster. We’ll be living there.”

“Lancaster!” It seemed to Karen that Lancaster was at least a continent away when it lay tucked into a cove off Parry Sound.

“Mama, Lancaster is not at the ends of the earth. We’ll be able to visit you often.

“Well, you’d better invite him to dinner,” Karen said.

After Sunday dinner Dr. Wilson told her that she was in love with Sarah and she with him and he asked her permission to marry her daughter. It took him ten minutes for Allen Wilson to win Karen over and for her to settle him in Jim’ s old arm chair in the library with Ian on his lap. Sarah and Allen planned to be married the next year and settle in Lancaster.

For Karen the next few months passed in a whirl of activity. She felt like the captain of a ship directing cargo and cajoling the mate to perform a multitude of duties, some of them not pleasant.

One morning Karen and Sarah had a tempest in the kitchen over dishes. “Mama, I can’t possibility take your wedding china. There will not be enough room on the ship. It’s true the Waubuno carries cargo, but it will need to carry cargo other than mine!”

Karen smiled. “I’ll keep it here for you and perhaps after you’re married for awhile you and Allen can carry to your home overland.”

“Or hire two steamers!” Sarah laughed. She twirled around and jumped up and down in excitement like she used to do when she was a little girl. “Oh, Mama, I’m so happy. I can’t wait to marry Allen and get on with our life together!”

They had a small wedding in the library with Reverend August Kemp officiating, and a group of fifty of Sarah and Allen’s friends and relatives. They had invited the people who couldn’t fit into the house – at least two hundred of them – to a housewarming in Lancaster and almost everyone had accepted the invitation. Karen bought Sarah a pair of white velvet gloves for one of her wedding presents. Sarah loved the gloves so much that she wore them with her wedding gown.

“Oh, the bride’s wearing white gloves!” she heard someone say as Sarah walked down the aisle next to Karen. “They should bring good luck.”

Karen wasn’t worried about luck. She knew that Sarah and Allen would be happy and lucky. As she smiled through her tears as Reverend Kemp married Sarah and Allen, Karen knew that James stood beside her and shared her happiness and sorrow. She felt his hand at her elbow as she served the guests wedding cake and wished the bride and groom a happy life and a safe journey to their new home.

Karen took some comfort in Sarah and Allen's happiness. Her smiles and excitement filled small crevices in the deep, dark depths that Karen would face alone when Sarah and William and the Waubuno had vanished over the horizon. She went with them down to the dock on the day before the Waubuno was to embark for Parry Sound and the small communities, including Lancaster, that dotted its inlets. The Waubuno was scheduled to sail at 10 a.m. the next morning, so Karen had invited Sarah and Allen to stay with her their last night in Mitchell. Sarah and Allen had slept in Sarah's old bedroom, and the thought of them laying together in Sarah's canopied double bed comforted Karen as she drifted off to sleep.

She climbed the ladder from the depths of sleep following the sound of quarreling voices and Ian's shrill yipping. Karen pulled her wool robe tightly around her and stumbled down the hall to Sarah's door. She knocked lightly, but the sound got lost in the voices and barking. She knocked again, more loudly this time. "Sarah, Allen, are you alright?"

"Allen opened the door and Ian shot out of the room onto her feet. She knew that he had been aiming for her lap because he enjoyed sitting there so much. "Is everything all right, Allen?"

Sarah appeared beside him, looking like a small doll beside his tall frame and broad shoulders. Her black hair hung in wisps around her face and the lamp light created a halo behind her head. "Mama, I had a dream about the Waubuno. I dreamed that me and Allen and the rest of the passengers were struggling in the water with a great weight pressing us down. " She grasped Allen's arm. "Please Allen, can't we take the stage to Lancaster? That dream was so real that I'm frightened."

Allen put his arm around her. “Sarah, it’s too late to change our plans now. Besides, all of our furniture and other cargo are stashed in the hold and we’ve paid our passage. It would take too long to unload everything and buy new tickets on the railroad or the stage. I promise you, darling, nothing’s going to happen. It’s just a dream, not a reality.” He patted her arm. “It’s just a bad dream.”

Hearing the distress in Sarah’s voice, Ian jumped up several times and licked her hand in spurts, trying to comfort her. “Mama, will you keep Ian until we get settled? If something happens to us, at least you will have him. Please, Mama, please take him.”

Karen hugged her daughter. “Of course I’ll keep Ian until you get settled or longer if you want. Haven’t I kept him with you all of these years?”

“Oh, Mama, how can I bear to leave you?”

“Sarah, you can bear to leave me because you’re going to start a wonderful new life with your husband. I’ll be here and I’ll come to visit often. Now go get a good night’s sleep so that you’ll be ready to go in the morning.”

Sarah kissed her. “You’re right, Mama. I need to get a good night’s sleep.” She handed Ian to Karen. “Can he sleep with you tonight? He squirms and walks all over us..”

Karen smiled. “Yes, he can sleep with me. “Now goodnight.” She shut the bedroom door firmly with one hand and grasped Ian with the other. But Karen couldn’t fall back to sleep. She couldn’t blame her sleeplessness on Ian because he quickly fell asleep on her pillow and snored until morning. Karen lay awake wondering. Sarah’s usually didn’t have premonitions or attacks of nerves. Maybe it was just bridal nerves.

Sarah's bridal nerves lasted all the next morning. During breakfast and during the trip to the docks, she tried to convince Allen to cancel their passage on the Waubuno. "Darling, we just can't afford to do that," Allen finally cried in exasperation. "Mama, will you tell her?"

Karen felt pulled apart by opposing currents. Part of her wanted to put her arms around Sarah and soothe her. "There, there, you don't have to go on this trip if you are so afraid to go." The other part said, "Sarah, stop this nonsense and go with your husband. Nothing is going to happen."

"This is between the two of you," Karen said. She blinked the tears from her eyes and holding Ian tightly to her heart, she watched Allen to lead Sarah up the gangplank. Allen beckoned to her, and she followed them to the deck.

"Allen, I have a premonition that this trip will end badly for us and the rest of the passengers. I dreamt again this morning that we were all struggling in the water with a heavy weight pressing us down. Please, let's cancel the ship and travel by train."

Karen admired Allen's patience because she knew that he had been giving Sarah the same reassurance for the entire night and early morning. Allen reminded Sarah once again that they had already paid their passage and loaded their furniture and baggage.

"We can unload it. Unloading it would be better than struggling in the water under a heavy weight!" Sarah cried.

Allen hugged her in front of everyone else on deck. "Sarah, please stop worrying so much. Let's get settled in our cabin."

"Allen, I just have this feeling that we shouldn't travel on this ship! Please reconsider!"

The other passengers were gathered around them now, drawn by the desperation in Sarah's voice. A few of them turned and hurried to the purser's office. "They're probably going to cancel their trips and maybe that's a good idea after all," Karen thought as the wind whipped her skirts and blew her cloak around her. She helped Allen and Sarah settle in their cabin and silently wished that they weren't going. The Waubuno's whistle blew and Karen had to get off the ship or go with them. Her feet wanted to stay firmly planted on the deck and she imagined herself going to Lancaster with Sarah and Allen and helping them get settled in their new home.

The Waubuno's whistle blew again and Karen made her way to the dock and stood with several other people waving the Waubuno out of the harbor. "God go protect you," she whispered as she watched the ship fade into the horizon before she finally left the dock and wended her way back home.

It took nearly a week for the Georgian Bay Transportation company to inform Karen that the Waubuno had vanished. The company sent her the same telegram that the search party had sent to it and several others. A member of the search party, a Mr. Cadotte, reported that while coming down Georgian Bay on November 23 he passed parts of a cabin and deck of a steamer and saw barrels of flour coming down from the Western Islands near the light house. Parts of the wreck and cargo were also scattered along the north shore. He was sure that the wrecked steamer was the Waubuno.

The wrecker tug Mary Ann set out for the scene, but ran into a violent storm that forced them to remain at the Christian Islands all night and into the next day. Finally the weather cleared and the tug arrived at the scene of the wreck to hunt for survivors. They searched the islets and the shore all day without finding anyone alive. They did find a damaged metallic life

boat, some bedding, life preservers and other parts of the wreck. The search party didn't find any survivors.

The days after Karen received the telegram blurred together in an anguished lump. She sat at her desk petting Ian and saying over and over, "There will be no grandchildren now." Again and again she repeated the words like a litany, like a psalm, and Ian whined in sympathy and stayed quietly on her lap.

She received more telegrams from the Georgian Bay Transportation Company. They lay on her desk, unopened. One day a gentleman came to call on her. She invited him into the library and listened to what he had to say while she sat and petted Ian. The gentleman, who had mutton chop whiskers that bobbled up and down when he talked, said that he had information that would be of comfort to her. He told her that mariners had used the wreckage to reconstruct what had happened to the Waubuno. The great weight that her daughter Sarah had experienced in her dream was the main deck of the capsized Waubuno. She capsized in the mountainous seas running in Georgian Bay, perhaps while trying to alter her course or falling into a trough. Time in a trough is the danger time. While in a trough, a ship can be buried by hundreds of tons of cargo, machinery, boiler, engine firebrick, chain cable and everything below decks burst through the covering normally above them and torn away her whole upper works.

After the Waubuno turned bottom up, the main deck was wrenched from its fastenings and sunk by the weight of the machinery and the heaviest freight. The catastrophe probably occurred so suddenly that none of the 24 passengers on board realized what was happening until it was too late. One minute they swayed dizzily in the arc of the Waubuno rolling. The next minute they were thrust down with iron hands, far, far, from light and air. They didn't even have

time to shout for help. They didn't even have time to pray. Nothing but bubbles lost in billows and raging foam marked what happened to them. Rescue parties searched diligently for lifebelts and other wreckage from the Waubuno until winter armor plated the water with ice. The following spring searchers found every lifebelt that had been on the Waubuno. They were all empty and unused because the passengers didn't have time to put them on.

After the freight and passengers had disappeared under the waves, the empty shell of the hull, floating just awash by the buoyancy of the wood in it, would surge along with wind, wave and current-maybe to the nearest rocks, to break up, maybe all the way across Lake Huron.

That, the gentleman informed her, was what happened to the Waubuno and its passengers and freight. Karen thanked him, offered him a cup of tea which he politely declined, and showed him out the door. He handed her the Sarah's glove, one of the pair of black gloves that Karen had given her as a wedding present. "I thought you might want to have this," he said.

At that moment Karen decided she would find the other glove. She would find out all she could about the Waubuno and she would find out what happened to Sarah and Allen. Karen had to stretch the moment over six months because the weather during the winter wouldn't permit her to traverse Georgian Bay. During the months of waiting she busied herself with learning as much as she could about the Waubuno. She bought subscriptions to the Owen Sound Advertiser, the Collingwood Enterprise, the North Star, the Orillia Times and the Toronto Telegram and cut out and read every story she could find about the Waubuno. "I'm researching my daughter and son-in-law's death," Karen told Ian as he squirmed on her lap, but she continued to clip and collect information about the Waubuno.

She discovered that the Waubuno had a history as old as Sarah and Allen. The Toronto Star said that the Waubuno had been built in Thorold in 1865 and measured 135 in length by 18 feet 5 inches in breadth and 7 feet in depth. Her gross tonnage totaled 465 tons and her registered tonnage 293 tons. Most mariners thought she was a good, strong sea boat. Another newspaper described her as a small but compactly built steamer designed to carry passengers between Collingwood and Sault Ste. Marie. Inspector Weatherly pronounced her to be "the best appointed vessel I have been on board of in my own district as regards requirements of safety."

The Waubuno had survived much heavy weather in the past fourteen years. Some newspaper accounts said that she was unseaworthy. The Kingston Daily British Whig of December 17, 1879, noted that a rigid enquiry is demanded into the loss of the Waubuno. It is alleged on almost undeniable evidence that the vessel was over laden, her hull rotten, and that in all respects she was unseaworthy. Karen thought the Parry Sound North Star story of December 12, 1879, was especially ironic. The story said that Mr. Long, the secretary of the Georgian Bay Transportation Company has undertaken to vouch for the seaworthiness of the Waubuno which was lost on the 22nd of November last in the Georgian Bay. Mr. Long's contention that the Waubuno was seaworthy would not have been necessary had not bout existed on that score.

From the Owen Sound Advertiser of May 19, 1870, Karen discovered that the Waubuno had carried troops for the Red River Expedition, soldiers who had helped defeat the Metis Rebellion, the first serious challenge to the authority of the new Dominion Government.

.The Waubuno had many adventures. She carried immigrants. According to the Orillia Times of June 6, 1879, she deposited a large party of immigrants at Orillia the night before. She carried people back and forth to camp meetings on the Christian Islands. The Orillia Times of August

14, 1879, reported that about 100 people took a moonlight sail on the lake aboard the Waubuno. The E.C. band accompanied the party, and an enjoyable time was spent.

She carried the Sons of Temperance on outings. The Orillia Times of September 13, 1877, said that the Sons of Temperance excursions came off on Friday 7th inst. And though not as large as been expected, owing to the fine harvesting weather it was quite a success. The romantic scenery on the route to Parry Sound is well worth seeing; sometimes the vessel passes between two rocks scarcely far enough apart to admit her safety. We would recommend anyone going on the lakes for pleasure or heath to take passage on the Waubuno for Parry Sound. On board they will get attention every one of the crew from captain on down take pleasure in accommodating passengers in every way in their power.

And according to the Owen Sound Advertiser of May 19, 1880, the Waubuno carried whiskey barrels. For a time William Beattie had been trying to make Parry Sound a temperance settlement, working against the people who were trying to flood the settlement with liquor. There were many Indians around the lumber camps for whom liquor was forbidden, but there was big money to be made selling liquor to the lumber jacks. The story goes that against the opposition of the captain and the engineer of the Waubuno, someone forced a consignment of whiskey aboard. The officers declared there was no more room for cargo in the hold or on the main deck, so the barrels supposedly were rolled on to the upper deck and concealed on the authority of the owners. If this story is true, tons of whisky twenty feet above the waterline of a narrow steamer would not add to the stability of the Waubuno in rough water.

The Waubuno's official measurements (she was built at Port Robinson and registered at Thorold in 1865) were length, stem to stern post 135 ft., beam 18.3 depth of hold 7 feet, net

tonnage 105 She was currently reported as a "150-foot steamer of 40- foot breadth." Both measurements might be correct these last being an over-all, from bow-staff to taffrail and across the main deck, guards and paddle boxes, which projected beyond and above the hull. Her superstructure was more than twice as wide s the base which floated it. This would not make for stability.

Many of the paddlewheel steamers of 70 years ago were, like the Waubuno, hard rollers. It was common practice to keep all hands counter-rolling ballast barrels against the sway of these ships in a seaway. It was laborious and not very effective. Barrels of whiskey broken loose and cavorting around on the top deck could capsize the little 100 tons vessel, but even without this problematical addition to her cargo she was hazardous venture in the sea running.

These possibly mythical whisky barrels were not among the cargo salvaged. Indians were suspected probably unjustly, of concealing them and other goods. Lo-the-Poor has been blamed for a great many things which never happened. The Indian Pedonquot reported the capsized hull of the Waubuno long before white searchers got around to it.

After reading all of these accounts Karen hugged Ian so tightly that he yelped in pain. “Ian, forgive me. I didn’t realize I was holding you so hard,” she said, sitting him on the floor. She picked him back up when she read a letter to the editor of the Enterprise from the rector of All Saints Church in Collingwood.

THE WAUBUNO

To the Editor of the Enterprize

SIR - There can be little doubt that all who were on board the WAUBUNO have perished and none left to tell the tale of the awful shipwreck This terrible visitation from the All Wise Ruler of the Universe has been the all absorbing thought and topic of conversation of every one words of sympathy for the dear ones left behind to morn the loss of the loved ones gone before have been uttered by all. The time has now come for action prompt, decided action, the widows and the orphans must have everything done to assist them in their dire necessity that lies in our power. The bread-winners have been taken from them. The God of the fatherless and the widow has entrusted them to the care of the people of this town, let us fully realize our responsibility.

My first thought was to announce through the papers that the offering on Sunday next in All Saint's church should be given for the assistance of the sufferers, and to suggest that it shall be generally done, but on second thoughts I considered it better not to do so, for it is a common thing in every community for people to excuse themselves from giving further and because they say they gave all they could afford on Sunday, when perhaps they were the very ones to give the smallest coins. I cannot think of any better plan than for the Mayor to open a subscription list, at his office, for the cheerful givers to deposit their gifts to have also an Aid Committee appointed to go to everyone not thus contributing and have the subscribers names with the amounts given, published in all the local papers. If the amount contributed be in proportion to the words of sympathy uttered Collingwood will do well. What ever is done must be done at once, while hearts are open, moreover, the need of some of the widows is most pressing, no time should be lost in letting them know that active measures are being taken to help them.

It has been my lot in life to see many cases of distress, but never have I found such desolate homes and broken hearts as I have among friends of the ship's company of the ill-fated WAUBUNO.

Obediently yours L. H. Kirby

The Rectory, Nov. 17, 1879

Collingwood Enterprise

November 28, 1879

“Desperate homes and broken hearts,” Karen murmured, burying her face in Ian’s fur. “Broken heart can’t begin to describe how I feel, Ian. I’m not a desperately poor widow, but I am a desperately heartbroken mother.”

The long winter of mourning wore on and it seemed to her that all she saw outside of her windows was a dark, sunless sky. It seemed to her that she sobbed throughout the entire winter of 1879-1880. Spring brought only the promise of traveling to Parry Sound with Ian and the white glove. She would find the Waubuno. One morning early in May of 1880 she and Ian took the train to Penetanguishene which had been one of the last places the Waubuno stopped. The marine men there told her to visit one of the Christian Island Light keepers, Jacob Kingsley by name, because he had been the last one to see the Waubuno. She hired a fisherman to take her and Ian to the light house in his boat.

"Ya want me to take a dog in my boat?" he demanded as she stepped into the boat with Ian in her arms.

"Why wouldn't I take Ian? He was important part of my daughter's life."

"Dogs in a boat are bad luck. There wuz dogs aboard the Waubuno and look what happened."

"I'll take my chances. I've nothing to lose."

He squinted at her. "I do!"

"I have to get to Christian Island,------- what is your name?

"My name is Ben Caldecott."

She waved a folded bill under his nose. "Will this do, Ben?"

"Come aboard," he said, taking the bill and tucking it into his pocket."But make no mistake about it, if I didn't think my ship would take the trip, I wouldn't go."'

The wind and the rain accompanied them on part of their trip to Christian Island. Karen could tell that Ben was getting more and more worried.

Finally he turned to her, “I think it’s about time to turn around, the weather’s getting worse.”

Karen ‘s stomach had been bobbing up and down with the rhythm of the waves but she couldn’t, she wouldn’t give up now that she was so close to where Sarah and Allen had been lost. Now she knew how Sarah and Allen must have felt on the Waubuno when the weather turned fierce. She pointed to Ian who was curled up under the seat. “He doesn’t seem to sense any danger.”

“What does he know? He’s a dog!”

“He can sense things. He knew something was wrong before Sarah did when she and Allen sailed on the Waubuno.

They kept plowing through the waves and gradually the sun came out, the wind died down, and the waves stopped slapping their boat around like it was a punch drunk boxer.

Karen spotted the lighthouse standing like a slim, white glove finger. Karen checked her pocket to be sure Sarah’s glove was still there. Its smooth velvet soothed her ragged soul.

A tall man with a black beard and wearing a blue uniform stood on the rocks. Karen could see he was shading his eyes with his hand.

“That’s Mr. Kingsley, the light keeper,” Ben told her.

“I gathered as much,” Karen said as she gathered Ian into arms and touched her glove one more time.

Ben beached his boat and helped Karen out of it. He took her arm.

Ian growled and Karen pulled back from him. “What are you doing?”

“I’m going to help you climb up the rocks.”

“I can help myself, thank you,” Karen said.

She and Ian reached the light keeper before Ben had climbed half up the hill.

“I’m Karen Blaine, Mrs. Sarah Wilson’s mother and Dr. Allen Wilson’s mother-in-law.”

“I’m Jacob Kingsley, one of the keepers of Christian Island Light.”

“I’m pleased to meet you, Mr. Kingsley. I’ve traveled a long way to meet you.” She held Ian in her extended arms. “And this is Ian.”

Ian licked Jacob’s hand and Jacob petted his head.

“I hope I can be of help, Mrs. Blaine. Won’t you and Ian come up and have tea with me?”

“I‘d like to have tea with you. Ben brought me over so he’ll need tea as well.”

“I need to head somewhere. You can stay here until this afernoon and I’ll come back by for you,” Ben said, breathless from his climb.

“That’s out of the question,” Karen said.

"You said you wanted to talk to Keeper Kingsley. This is your chance. I'll be back this afternoon." He turned and headed back down the hill before Karen could move.

Then she recovered herself. "I'm so sorry for his bad manners, Mr. Kingsley. Do you have a boat I can borrow to get back to Penetanguishene? I'll see that it's returned to you."

He held out his arm. "Why don't you and Ian come inside and we'll have tea and talk this over."

Karen smiled. "I don't seem to have a range of choices."

She tucked Ian back under her arm and followed Jacob up the wooden stairs into the lighthouse. She noted that the kitchen was cozy and warm and that he already had the teakettle boiling and a plate of biscuits and sandwiches on the table which was covered with a cheerful red and white checkered cloth.

"Will I be meeting Mrs. Kingsley as well?" she asked. "She certainly has created a cheerful kitchen."

"I am both Mr. and Mrs. Kingsley," he smiled. Bending over, he reached into a cupboard and produced two bowls. He ladled water into one and a small piece of meat in the other and put them on the floor. "Ian, here is your tea."

Ian jumped out of Karen's arms and had his tea before Karen and Jacob even sat down.

After Jacob had taken her cape and hung it up, they sat at the table and had their tea. Between sips and bites he told her that the Christian Island light was officially the first of the imperial towers that the Canadian Government had built on Georgian Bay. It was built to light the early trade routes between the ports of Collingwood, Owen Sound, and the military

establishments at Penetangishene. It featured a 5th order Fresnel lens encased inside an ornate copper and cast iron lantern room that had been imported from France.

Karen told him about Sarah and Allen. She showed him Sarah's glove.

"What can you tell me about the Waubuno?" she asked him with tears in her eyes.

His glance felt like a pat on her shoulder. "I can tell you much, but let's first have our tea," he said.

After tea, Jacob showed her the Keeper's Log which had recorded some of Sarah's last hours on earth.

Keepers Log

Christian Island Light

November 22, 1879

The Waubuno passed the lighthouse this day and it was riding well in the rough weather.

December 6, 1879. The Daily British Whig published in Kingston reported that Captain Taylor of the schooner J.G. Worts was lying in the lee of Christian Island when the lost Waubuno passed by. She lurched, but recovered and proceeded up. The Captain followed her course for about fifteen miles. A furious gale was blowing at the time, and Captain Taylor thinks the Waubuno must have been swamped almost as soon as she reached the shelter of the island."

Karen sat petting Ian for a long time after she read the log. She didn't even realize she had been crying until Jacob handed her a large white handkerchief."

She smiled her thanks and patted Ian so hard that he yelped.

“I have something else to give to you,” Jacob said. “I know it will make you cry harder, but at the right time tears can heal.”

She didn’t raise her head from Ian’s. Jacob left the room and came back. In his hand he held a shiny black bag. Karen had often seen that bag, as often as Allen had carried it to the house and on his visits to patients.

She gently put Ian down on the floor by the bowls and walked over to him. He held out the bag and she cradled it in her arms like it was a baby, Sarah’s baby.

“How did you find that?” she choked.

“It washed up on the rocks below the light.”

“Is that all that washed up?”

“They haven’t found any bodies, Mrs. Blaine. “It is doubtful that they will.”

“Why is it doubtful, Mr. Kingsley?”

“The Bay has deep holes and hidden places. “

“I‘ll search until I find my daughter and her husband.”

“It’ might take a lifetime, Mrs. Blaine.”

“My time will be well spent, Mr. Kingsley. Please show me where you found the bag.”

He helped her drape her cape over her shoulders and she picked up Ian. They climbed back down the hill to the water’s edge. “What do you hope to find down here, Mrs. Blaine?”

“I came here to find my daughter and Sarah and her husband Allen.”

He said nothing, but she felt his strong hand guiding her down the hill. They reached the water's edge and she stood watching the waves gently riding and somersaulting over each other.

"It wasn't this calm the night they died," she said.

"It wasn't calm at all. The storm produced waves the size of mountains and the wind sounded like a hundred steam whistles."

"Your log says that you saw the Waubuno pass by and she was holding her own."

"That is true, but she there are so many things that could have happened. She could have hit a rock. She could have been leaking. The wind could have capsized her."

Karen couldn't help it. She sat down hard on a rock at the water's edge and sobbed. Ian ran up and down on the sand in front of her, barking wildly. "I read all about it. The weight of the deck and the cargo pressed them all down…I can't bear it any longer."

Karen jumped up from the rock and waded into the water. She wasn't sure what she knew and didn't know anymore, but she knew she had to find Sarah. She throws out the glove.

Jacob waded in after her and pulled her back onto the beach. He put his arms around Karen and she cried. She cried and Ian barked and the sun slowly wound its way across the sky to the western horizon. "As I said, tears can be healing," he said calmly.

"I am so sorry, Mr. Kingsley. I have been such a bother."

"I think we know each other well enough now to use first names," he said.

His brown eyes held hers. "May I be of help, Karen?"

She smiled through her tears. “Yes, I think you may be of help, Jacob.”

Together they tossed Sarah’s glove out into the Bay and watched the playful waves guide it into the Christian Island sunset path.

Cove Island Lighthouse-Cove Island, Bruce Peninsula-Georgian Bay

In September 1881, the schooner Regina went down off of Cove Island on the Bruce Peninsula and her Captain Amos Tripp, drowned. Cove Island Light keeper George Currie discovered Tripp’s body and buried him on the west side of the island. Later, relatives removed Tripps body to Collinwood. Local legend says that Captain Tripp’s ghost appears on dark nights, demanding to play a hand of cards with the light keeper of Cove Island.

Detroit Post and Tribune, Thursday, July 19, 1883. The Sheboygan Times of Saturday says: “The schooner Glad tidings came in to port from Manitowoc. This is Capt. Bundy, the sailor preacher’s new schooner, and the third and largest built for him within a few years….Will sail

for the east shore, and after a short cruise leave for Georgian Bay, where she will cruise for two months…"

This story happened in imagination.

Captains Contentious

In his wildest whiskey induced fantasies, Bryce McCloud never saw himself making captain in the Red River expedition, working as a lumberjack on the Bruce- spelling slightly different than his name- Peninsula, or keeping a haunted lighthouse. He lived through and survived all three experiences in varying degrees. The new Canadian Confederation's Red River Rebellion against Louis Riel, the Métis, in Manitoba taught him that fighting for freedom makes fanatical fighters and that he personally enjoyed any kind of fighting. After he helped quash the Red River Rebellion he went to work in the lumber camps of Georgian Bay, especially the Pine River camp. At Pine River he learned to perfect his fighting, to cut logs, to survive in a camboose house and to eat lumberjack food, and to get out of bed the next morning and do the same thing that day. He learned how to play cards, drink, and use profanity frequently and creatively. He also learned to love the forests of Georgian Bay and the Bruce Peninsula, the birch trees and cedars, pines, junipers, and spruces so much that he didn't want to leave when the he and his fellow lumberjacks had cut down the stand of pines they were hired to cut down. He also loved the water and the currents and the weather and the rocks. Bryce became the light keeper at Cove Island before the last lumberjack left the lumber camps on the Peninsula.

In the beginning Bryce wasn't so sure how he would fare as a light keeper. "Hmm, most keepers take their families out there with them," the white haired store keeper at Hardwick's Grocery told him when he was shopping for supplies. "It gets lonely out there. You might find

yourself talking to yourself. The store keeper smiled at him. “You could go courting before you go to the island. Do you have a sweetheart?”

Bryce didn’t even glance at the store keeper as he put a package of cornmeal into his shopping basket. “I had one once.”

“Jenny. How could he tell anyone about Jenny, especially a stranger? But on the other hand, sometimes strangers understood the most. “She died,” he said.

“That happens,” the store keeper said sympathetically as Bryce thumped a sack of dried beans in his basket. “That happened to me, too. But after that I met another girl and she turned out to be the best person for me. She’s been my wife for forty years now.”

“Things don’t turn out that way for everybody,” Bryce said, watching the store keeper totaling his purchases on a pad of yellow paper.

The storekeeper looked up and smiled at him. “You’ve got to give life a chance,” he said. “Don’t you need to get some coffee, too?”

“I almost forget the coffee!” Bryce walked to the back of the store, thankful that conversation about Jenny and sweethearts had ended.

He didn’t realize that the conversation hadn’t really ended until he was putting away his groceries in the wooden kitchen cupboard in the stone light keeper’s cottage on Cove Island. The last keeper had evidently had a wife because the cottage was tidy and ready to move into. The kitchen cook stove and the heating stove in the parlor had both been blacked and the furniture had been polished with beeswax.. At least it smelled like beeswax. He lightly touched one of the posters on his four poster bed and put his finger in his mouth. Yes, it was beeswax. Jenny had

polished her mama's furniture with beeswax every week. One night when he had come courting he helped her polish the furniture and she had looked at him with those sea green eyes and said, "I'll polish our furniture the same, Bryce."

That was the night that he realized he loved her and wanted to marry her. For the next year he worked hard to convince Jenny to feel the same way. Luckily for him, she didn't need much convincing. They planned to be married the spring after he returned from the Red River Rebellion. He had already accepted a job in Orillia at a shipping company and they had bought a house and were furnishing it. Then diphtheria came to Orillia and Jenny got sick. She suffered for a week, grew worse, and then died in his arms. For a year after she died his life amounted to one continuous shriek of anguish. He worked as a lumberjack in several camps thinking that the thunk, thunk of his axe against the wood would drive the sound of her soft voice from his ears and from his heart. During his three years of lumber jacking he discovered that the stillness of the pine forests and the music of the Georgian Bay waves didn't cover the sound of her voice or obliterate her face., but they provided a soothing counterpoint to her presence. When the timber company closed the camp, he eagerly accepted the position as keeper of the Cove Island Light because he knew now that this was his home and he had grown used to co existing with Jenny.

Now he settled into the stone keeper's cottage at the light house and the ghost of Jenny moved in with him. Bryce climbed the 95 wooden steps leading from the base of the light house to the lamp room and Jenny climbed alongside him. He marveled at the last nine steps that formed a carved iron staircase that ended at an iron door that led to the lamp room at the very top of the light house. He spent that first week learning to light and extinguish the lamp. He read in the keeper's log how George Collins, the first keeper, described the first time the light was lit on

the night of October 30, 1858. “The light…seems to gather together, rolling itself up into a dark cloudy night and then bursting out into a brilliant flame and illuminates the whole horizon.”

The second week he had to take his skiff and row to the mainland to get a few more groceries. This time the store keeper who waited on him was a young woman with blond hair and green eyes. He noted her shapely figure as he took his purchase from his basket and put them on the counter. She didn’t add them up on paper like the male clerk had done. She added them in her head. He double checked her addition on a piece of scrap paper. Her addition checked out.

“I hear you’re the new light keeper,” she said as she helped him load his groceries into the canvas bag he’d brought to hold them.

“I’m the new light keeper,” he said. “Who told you that?”

“My Dad told me. He said you stopped in a few weeks ago to buy groceries.”

“Oh, the old guy’s your dad. Where is he today?”

“He and my mom are at church.”

“I forgot today’s Sunday. Why aren’t you at church?”

She smiled at him with those green eyes and for a minute he thought Jenny had been resurrected from a ghost memory to a real woman standing in front of him. “I went to Sunday school, but I told Dad I’d tend the store for him this afternoon so he and Mama could attend the bazaar.”

“Do they always have bazaars on Sunday afternoon?”

"Only once a year to raise money. Why don't you stop by before you go back to the island?"

"I need to get back. By the time I put my groceries away and play a game of cards it will be time to light the light again."

"You play cards on Sunday! You'll get in trouble with Captain Harmon."

"Who's Captain Harmon?"

"He was master of the Glory Hallelujah. "

"What's the Glory Hallelujah?"

"It was a ship that folks around here called a floating Bethel. He sailed it all around Georgian Bay, visiting almost every cove and inlet in the bay and even inventing some. He'd stop for a few days or even a week or two and go into the lumber camps to preach the gospel. He preached a real fire and brimstone sermon and his wife and daughters would help him with the singing and praying."

Bryce stepped back inside the store and closed the door behind him. "He took his wife and daughters with him?"

"On almost every trip. Then the girls grew up and wanted to get married, but he forbade them to for a long time. Finally, one of them eloped with a lumberjack. The other stayed at home as the spinster daughter. They sailed the preaching circuit for ten more years or so. Then the Glory Hallelujah went down in a storm over in Blue Bay."

“Oh.” Bryce couldn’t think of anything else to say. Her eyes looked so like Jenny’s eyes. He opened the door again. “Thank you for the help.”

“Be careful at the light house. It’s haunted, you know.”

He stopped with his hand on the door. “What do you mean it’s haunted?”

“I mean it’s haunted. “

“Who’s haunting it?”

“Captain Harmon, of course. Along with his wife and daughter.”

“Why would they haunt the lighthouse?”

“The captain never told me why. But he might tell you.”

“Sure he will,” Bryce said. “Thanks again for the help.”

He left the grocery store shaking his head. That girl was pretty and her eyes were astonishingly like Jenny’s, but she had to be crazy. Imagine telling him that the Cove Island Lighthouse was haunted.

That night he saw Captain Harmon for the first time. He had polished and lighted the lamp and was standing in the tower listening to the wind howl and shake the building and watching the waves crash on the rocks below when he saw a small, wooden schooner tossing and turning in the waves dangerously close to the beach. He grabbed a life buoy and a rope and hurried down the stairs as quickly as he could, and ran to the beach. Running against the wind, he gasped for breath as he reached the water’s edge and prepared to throw out his rope to the crew of the schooner. Instead, the crew threw a rope to him or at least one of the crew. The man

had a gray beard that reached down to his chest and wore a blue coat with yellow buttons. Bryce saw that he had piercing gray eyes the color of his beard. The man tossed him a soaking wet rope. “Catch hold of this rope for me lad.” “

Bryce caught the rope. “Thank you for rescuing me, lad. Now, tie up my ship to the dock so we can have a talk.”

“There’s no place to tie her up,” Bryce said.

“She’ll be alright,” the man said. “Now let’s have that chat.”

“Sir, are you all right? Was there anyone else on the ship besides you?”

“Oh yes, “the man said. “My wife and daughter. But they’re alright.”

Bryce stared at the wreck but he couldn’t see anyone else in the rigging.”Where are they sir? I can’t see them.”

“They’re right here, “the man said. “Just turn your head.”

Bryce turned his head and saw a woman and a girl standing next to a piece of driftwood on the beach.

Bryce scratched his head and then he scratched his ear. “What are you doing here? What are they doing here?”

Graybeard fixed Bryce with a piercing gray gaze. “I came to tell you the story of salvation young man. I came to show you the error of your sinful ways and to lead you home to God.”

“I thought you wrecked your ship by the lighthouse,” Bryce said.

“God guides the Glory Hallelujah, I don’t.”

Bryce pointed to the ship being broken apart by the waves. “His guidance is a little off!”

Captain Harmon’s gray eyes flashed zeal. “God has his own purposes and works in his own time.”

Bryce rubbed his eyes. It had to be spray splashed in his eyes or his night imagination or both. He couldn’t really be seeing a ghostly lake captain preaching a sermon and his wife and daughter in the amen corner. “Why are you here, anyway? Where did you come from?”

“”My name is Captain Hezekiah Harmon and I’m here to tell you the story of the gospel, to bring you the glad tidings.”

“I’ve already heard them, thank you,” Bryce told him.

“Son, you need to hear them many times. We all do. What is your name, son?”

Bryce couldn’t believe he was introducing himself to a ghost. “My name is Bryce McCloud.”

“Pleased to meet you Mr. McCloud. Now let’s get to the business at hand.”

“Captain Harmon, don’t you think you ought to take your ladies inside the lighthouse where it’s warm?”

Captain Harmon scratched his chin. “I suppose I could. He turned to the three women. What’s your pleasure mother and girls? Do you want to stay out here or go inside by the fire?”

The two women turned and walked through the closed light house door. Captain Harmon laughed, a laugh that sounded like booming surf. “That answers my question.”

“Bryce opened the door, and the two women swished by him. He didn’t feel a blast of cold, just a shiver of wet spray. He held the door for the captain. “Are you coming in while it’s open or walking through it?”

The Captain came in. Bryce took off his coat and hung it on the rack by the door. He went to the cupboard and took out some blankets. “Would you like a blanket to keep warm, Captain?

The Captain stood with his back to the fire while his wife and daughters sat in the chairs in front of it.

Bryce studied the captain whose clothes still dripped water even though he stood in front of the fire. “Why are you here, Captain? Or probably the most important question is how you are here.”

“I spend several months cruising Georgian Bay on one of the Glory Hallelujahs, I don’t remember which one, and it sank in a storm in Blue Bay, right out there by the lighthouse, with me, my wife, and daughter aboard.”

“If the ship sank with you, your wife and daughter how can you be here now?”

“I am here and I’m going to make the most of it,” Captain Hezekiah Harmon said.

The captain sat down in an empty chair in front of the fire and lit Bryce’s pipe. He puffed a few moments before he answered. “Emily my wife and Abigail my daughter voyaged with me even after Libbie eloped with the lumber jack. I trained them well you know.”

"You mean I trained them well, don't you, Hezekiah? You were at sea most of the time."

The captain's wife arose from her chair and stood in front of him with her hands on her hips. Bryce sensed that the channel for this argument was well marked. Bryce noticed that the Captain's wife was still pretty, even in her ghostly state with long red curls, green eyes, and rosy cheeks. As he watched, Captain Harmon pinched her wife's cheeks. "Chock full of vim and vigor, aren't you Emily," the Captain chortled. "That's why I married you my dear, I liked your spirit. I liked your spirit too, Abigail."

The captain's daughter Abigail walked left the fire and stood beside her mother. "You and Mama taught me well, Papa. I didn't marry Jeremiah."

"I forbade you to marry, Jeremiah Conrad. If you had I would have disowned you."

Abigail's gray eyes flashed just like her father's did. "I should have married him no matter what you said," father. "I wish I had."

Captain Harmon huffed and puffed up his chest to twice its normal size. "I am your father and I knew what was best for you. You did right to obey me."

Abigail's eyes filled with tears. "I obeyed you and I lived a lonely life without Jeremiah. Then, when I finally grew enough courage to marry Jeremiah, the Glory Hallelujah went down and it was too late! I led a sad life, father. A lonely, unfulfilled life."

Captain Harmon stared at his daughter in bewilderment. "I thought you were happy, Abigail. I just wanted your happiness."

"I should have voyaged the unchartered waters, father. I should have married Jeremiah!"

Abigail ran from the parlor into Bryce's small bedroom and her mother followed her. "

"Now, now, Abby," Captain Harmon shouted, staring after his wife and daughter, but not making a move to follow. He sat heavily back down in his chair and mopped his brow with a large red handkerchief that he took out of his pocket.

"I can't stand to see her cry," he said.

Bryce picked up the gin rummy hand he had been playing the night before. "Want to play a game of cards to take your mind off things?"

"I don't play cards," the Captain said. "Playing cards is sinful."

"So is making your daughter cry," Bryce said.

Captain jumped to his feet. "I'll fix things," he said. He hurried into the bedroom and Bryce could hear the deep rumble of his voice like a distant thunder storm brewing above the clouds in Georgian Bay. Several minutes later Captain Harmon came back and sank back into the chair by the fire. "I fixed things," he said. "I told her she could marry Jeremiah. I told her I'd give them my permission."

"But where is Jeremiah?" I asked.

"I'm not sure, but Abby is," the Captain said. "She'll find him."

"But is he…?"

The Captain looked at me, his gray eyes enquiring. "Is he what?"

“Never mind,” Bryce said. If Jeremiah still lived Jeremiah would be in for quite a shock. And wasn’t this entire visit and conversation a figment of Bryce’s imagination anyway

“Young man, I must insist that you put those cards away,” Captain Harmon told Bryce.

“Life is like a game of cards, Captain Harmon. You play the hand that fate delivers you, and hope you have the luck to win a few.”

Captain Harmon snatched one of the cards which happened to be a king, from Bryce’s hand. “Life is faith in Christ the King.” He waved the card at Bryce. “It’s your turn to step out in faith.”

Bryce took a deep breath and snatched the king from the captain’s hand and stuffed it in his pocket. He’d show this know it all ghost Captain. “I’m going into town he said. I’ve got to see someone.” Bryce pulled on his slicker and hurried out into the rainy night. He was glad the wind had died down because he didn’t favor taking the boat out on a wild night. The bay was choppy but it only sent out two to three foot waves to accompany him as he rowed to the mainland and hurried to Hardwick’s grocery. He prayed she would be behind the counter instead of her father and the Captain must have been praying too, because she stood there behind the counter when he opened the door.

“What are you doing out on a bad night?” she asked him. “Did you forget something?”

“Captain Harmon sent me,” he said, smiling into her green eyes so much like Jenny’s had been. Yet she was not Jenny. This girl was an entire new life that he was willing to seek on faith. He knew with a certainty that he couldn’t explain that when he returned to the lighthouse with the promise of seeing her again, he would watch the Captain and his wife and daughter and the

Glory Hallelujah disappear over the horizon and he would not see them again. But just to be certain he would throw that king overboard before he got home!

Lake Ontario

Thirty Mile Point Light-Lake Ontario

Thirty Mile Point is so named because it is thirty miles east of the mouth of the Niagara River, which empties into Lake Ontario. The lighthouse was constructed in 1875 to mark a sandbar and shoal located offshore. Several vessels have been lost near the point. A French vessel under explorer Sieur de La Salle was lost here in 1678. The H.M.S. Ontario, carrying British troops and an army payroll of $15,000, sank here in 1780..

The Golden Hill area most likely gets its name from the goldenrod that once bloomed on an island off the point which has since eroded away. However, some say that the name comes from lost gold and silver from the Ontario.

This story happened in imagination.

Buried Treasure

Somerset, Golden Hill, New York: August 1812

"Deathbed confessions are quite convenient," Calvin Meade said to his family surrounding his bed. His daughter Claudine stood to his left by the wardrobe, his Philip son to

his right, and his wife Barbara sat on a low stool in front of him holding his hand. Philip noticed that his color was a little better today than it had been yesterday. Maybe his father would recover after all, Philip thought.

"What do you mean, Papa?" Philip asked.

"The confessors don't linger to face the consequences of their actions," his father said.

Philip's mother, Barbara who had stayed with his husband Calvin through the lean hungry times smoothed his hand. "Calvin, you don't have to be afraid to tell us anything and this isn't necessarily your death bed."

Calvin took time out to cough and cough some more, evidence of the pneumonia that was slowly strangling him, before he could reply. Finally he gasped,. "We started out as British, not American."

Philip stared at him. "But I'm American. If the British abominations on the lakes come to war, I will be fighting the British."

"Philip, many loyal Americans started out British and many Loyalist Americans remained British!"

"But not us, Papa! The British are arrogant dictators who refuse to stay beaten. We beat them in one war and soon they will be forcing us to beat them in another."

"Philip, I was a captain under Colonel Mercer at Fort Oswego during the Seven Years' War."

Barbara's stopped caressing her husband's hand. This news was new to her. "You were a British soldier? But you said you were a Frenchman captured by the British!"

"Barbara, I simply reversed the truth. I was a wounded English captain defeated by the French General Montcalm at Fort Oswego. I escaped from the Fort and made my way to Somerset through the woods. I liked it here so I stayed, cut timber, earned money, and bought our farm. I never wanted to join the Army since I am not a fighter by nature. My father insisted that I join."

Philip spoke again. "Meade isn't a French name!"

"Your grandfather Dubois was French, but your grandfather Meade was British. Does that explain it? It's no puzzle that you have divided loyalties." Calvin attempted to laugh at his joke but his laugh ended in a paroxysm of violent coughing, so violent that Barbara felt compelled to speak for him. "You know the rest of the story, Philip, both you and Claudine know it well."

Claudine tossed the black curls that her father so loved. "Yes, I know it Mama. You and Papa met at a rising of a barn and you told her about the farm that you had just bought while you were dancing. You soon started courting and got married in the spring of 1770. You had me and Philip in 1775 and 1776- he's the oldest! - and worked hard on your farm."

"War wounds,"Calvin coked, trying to get back into the conversation.

"Yes, Papa, I know you were wounded in the French and Indian War," Philip said. "Who did you fight for in the Revolution? The British?"

"I was an observer," Calvin said.

"Observer!" Philip snorted. "I'll wager that you spied for the Loyalist cause."

"Indeed I did, but no one knew about it, least of all your mother." Barbara snatched her hand away. With a surprising burst of strength, Calvin grabbed it back and pressed it to his heart. Philip couldn't keep from admiring the gesture. He knew how much his father loved his mother.

"Papa, how could you!" Claudine cried.

"My ties to Britain were stronger than my ties to America at that point," Calvin explained.

Philip let his scorn ring in his voice. "Your ties to Britain! You deserted from the British Army, Papa!"

"Just because I deserted doesn't mean that I wasn't proud of what the British Army accomplished. My brother served in the King's Regiment during the Revolution."

Barbara was curious."How do you know that, Calvin? Did you keep in touch with your family from here?"

"Of course I was the black sheep, the scapegrace since I had deserted from the army, but my mother wrote to me. She told me about Henri. She named him Henri as a concession to my father but he joined the King's Regiment and fought in the Revolution against the Americans. He was a brave soldier."

"Was, Papa? Did he die in battle?" Claudine asked.

"He went down on the HMS Ontario."

"What was that, Papa?"

"Of course they don't mention the Ontario much around here, even after the British acknowledged it happened," Calvin said.

"What is it, Papa?"

"The Ontario was the biggest war ship on the Great Lakes at the time. She was built at Carleton Island in May 1780."

"Where's Carleton Island, Papa?" Claudine asked.

"It is where Lake Ontario meets the St. Lawrence River," Philip told her impatiently. "Will you keep quiet so Papa can tell his story, Claudine?"

Calvin smiled at his daughter. "I will always endeavor to answer your questions, my dear. The Ontario was built at Carleton Island in May 1780 and spent the summer carrying troops and supplies around Lake Ontario. On October 31, 1780 she was on her way from Ft. Niagara to Oswego, her first port of call when she sank in a storm, some say near Thirty Mile Point,"

"That's not the entire story, Papa," Philip said.

"Of course it isn't, Philip. My brother Henri went down on the Ontario and they never recovered his body. He and 120 men, women, and children on board were lost. Only six bodies, some British caps, and the ship's sails washed ashore here. Legend has it that the Ontario was

also carrying about $15,000 in gold which was a year's pay for the British garrison at Fort Haldimand. "

Barbara thought that it was time to intervene. "I'll answer the question before you can ask your father, because I was there," she said. "We were plowing in the lake pasture on Goldenrod Hill in spring 1781 when a body washed up on shore. No, it's wasn't your Uncle Henri. The body that washed up on the shore by our farm was that of a child, a little girl with brown braids and a blue calico dress. At that point I didn't even know that she was from the Ontario and I wouldn't have cared if I had known. She was just a little girl and she had no one to see that she was buried properly. Your Papa and I dug her a grave under the willow tree ourselves and I made her a new dress and a doll."

"Oh, Mama, her grave is that one in our plot on Goldenrod Hill that has a white cross and it says Anna on it. I always wondered about her," Claudine said.

"Where did you get the name Anna?" Philip wondered.

"She had a locket around her neck that said Anna."

"That is so sad, Mama."

"I thought so, Claudine. That's why we buried her in our family plot."

"We found out later that she was on the Ontario," Calvin said. "The British kept the sinking quiet for years. I found out from my mother when she wrote and told me about Henri."

"I'll put some goldenrod on her grave the next time I go up the hill," Claudine said.

“Let’s climb up the Goldenrod Hill tomorrow, Aunt Claudine. I like climbing that hill.” Philip’s 12 year old son Joshua and his younger sister Emily had slipped so quietly into the room that Philip hadn’t heard them.

“I want to climb Goldenrod Hill too. It’s pretty up there and I like to hear the bees buzzing and pick the flowers!”

“Girls don’t belong climbing hills. You need to stay home and work on your sewing,” Joshua told her.

“I’m going with you,” Emily edging close to him and trying to take his hand.

“I’m not climbing the hill with a girl,” Joshua said.

“You climbed it with me last month. Why can’t you climb it with me this month?”

“I’m a month older and I don’t want to climb the hill with my sister anymore.”

“Then I’ll climb it myself,” Emily said, sticking out her tongue at him.

“Philip took his son gently by the arm and pointed him toward the door.” “Why don’t you two run along and see where Mama is keeping herself?”

But Joshua walked over to Calvin’s bed and put his hand on Calvin’s arm. “Grandpa, what’s wrong? Are you dying again?” Joshua asked. “Can I help you with the farm work so you don’t have to die so soon?”

Calvin smiled at his grandson. “We can start plowing tomorrow.”

They plowed through the War of 1812 and Calvin lived long enough to see Philip return home gravely wounded. For a time Calvin thought that he would outlive his son, but Philip gradually recovered from his wounds enough to take over the farm. When Calvin irrevocably died in 1820, the Golden Hill farm that he bequeathed to Philip had produced enough food for the family, several herds of cattle and sheep, and enough wheat, barley, and corn to sell for cash money.

Philip and his wife Lily gingerly took over the farm after Calvin died because his mother Barbara was still alive and he and Lily didn't want to shove her aside. So they all lived in the old farmhouse together. Lily had been heard to remark that the farmhouse could hold three times the number of people that lived there. And Philip was still recovering from his war wounds.

August 1820

Philip sat by the fire in the cozy farmhouse kitchen, smoking his pipe and reading his newspaper. His wife Lily sat across from him, her knitting needles clicking as she worked on winter scarves for Philip and Joshua. His mother Barbara sat next to him, her knitting needles also flashing as she knitted a pair of mittens for his daughter Emily.

"Papa, tell us the story again," Joshua begged.

"It's such an old story by now it has grown a long, white beard," Philip teased his son.

Lily smiled. "He still hasn't tired of your telling of it."

Phillip smiled, and recounted the story once again. *Of all the Great Lakes, Lake Ontario hosted more British action during the Seven Year's War, the Revolutionary War, and the War of*

1812. Oh yes, there were those who claimed that Lake Erie with its facts of the Amherstburg Naval Yard on the Detroit River, Perry's fleet building and the battle of Lake Erie had a valid claim to this honor, but Lake Ontario wins hands down. There were privateers on Lake Ontario during all of the wars, and I was one of Samuel Dixon of the Neptune's crew during the War of 1812. I helped the Americans win the Battle of Cranberry Creek. On July 19, 1813, Captain Dixon fixed the position of the British gunboat Spitfire and the 15 bateaux it protected between Gananoque and Prescott, Upper Canada on the St. Lawrence River.. Captain Jehial Dimmick of the Fox was his partner. These two privateers and about fifty New York militia intercepted the British convoy on the St. Lawrence River before it entered Lake Ontario. We captured most of the boats, 250 barrels of flour, 300 hog's heads, ammunition and other stuff. We took more than 60 prisoners. But we were thorough enough. One or more of the British boats escaped and sounded the alarm. Two groups of gunboats and bateaux searched the river and lake for us. We landed on the New York shore just southeast of Gananoque and set a trap for them British. The next day they came along with reinforcements of regulars from Kingston and advanced on us where we were holed up at the mouth of Goose Creek. We licked em good and sailed two Sackets Harbor. We got paid a bounty for the prisoners we took. That's how I bought more land for our farm. That's how I got wounded. And that's how I told your grandfather on his real death bed that I finally understood why he didn't have the stomach to fight any longer. I didn't either. I didn't want to watch anymore men die or any more ships with masts splintered and run aground. I wanted to come home and farm and that's what I'm doing.

Philip glanced around the comfortable farmhouse kitchen and at his mother and wife knitting by the fireside. His son, Joshua was in the barn doing chores and his daughter Emily

was in the henhouse gathering eggs. “Now I know exactly what you meant, Papa,” he whispered and it seemed to him that Calvin shook his hand.

Josh slammed the kitchen door, shattering the peaceful atmosphere in the room. Philip noticed that Josh had become more and more restless lately and he wasn’t quite sure how to help his son. “Pa, I’m going to go digging for buried treasure in the pasture tomorrow.”

“What are you talking about, Josh?”

“Sam Jenkins told me about this. He said that a treasure from the Ontario’s supposed to be buried on Golden Hill.”

“That’s nonsense, Josh. It’s called Golden Hill because of the goldenrod that grows in the meadow.”

“Well Sam’s uncle’s a sailor on a schooner and he’s heard stories that the treasure from that British Revolutionary War ship the Ontario is buried up in the meadow. The story goes that his uncle found a small chest of money on the beach at the bottom of Golden Hill that the waves had washed ashore. He buried it and hurried home to tell his wife about it. When they came back together to dig up the money, they couldn’t find it.”

“Why didn’t his uncle make a treasure map?” Emily asked. She had tiptoed in so quietly that Philip hadn’t heard her come in.

“He probably didn’t think of it,” Philip said. “I don’t think I believe that story anyway.”

“I’m going to look for it tomorrow,” Josh said.

"I'll help!" Emily cried.

"You don't need to help. I'll find it myself," Joshua set his jaw stubbornly and went to look for a shovel.

Josh and Emily spent the next two weeks digging for the treasure on the beach below Golden Hill. Emily gradually lost interest and married Abner King and moved to Albany. Josh married Sarah Bartholomew, one of the Bartholomew girls from the neighboring farm, and they bought more acreage on Golden Hill. Josh still went down to the beach every weekend to search for the treasure and still turned up no signs of it. For years, Philip watched his son's futile search for treasure. Josh even got his wife Sarah and their children involved, especially his son Amos.

August 1834

One day in early spring ten year old Amos visited Philip who now was confined to his chair in front of the fire. "Grandpa, did you ever find the treasure map?"

"Treasure map?" His question gave Philip an idea. "No, I never found it, but Amos I never looked for it. I don't believe much in the treasure, not like your father does."

"The pirates must have left a map to guide them to the treasure," Amos said.

That night, Philip conquered his creaking joints enough to leave his chair, collect a paper and pencil and draw a map. He asked his wife Lily whose joints creaked much less than his did to take the map to the hen house and hide it under the rafters. That night Philip made a secret trip to the beach below Golden Hill with a burlap sack on his back.

The next morning Amos slammed into the kitchen from the hen house. He waved the map in his hand and shouted, “Grandpa, look what I found!”

“What is it, Amos?”

“It’s the treasure map for the buried treasure, Grandpa. I need to show Papa!” He rushed back outside to find Joshua. Philip hoped that he had buried the coins deep enough so the waves didn’t wash them away before Joshua and Amos found them.

Josh and Amos came back from the beach carrying the burlap bag between them.”I found the treasure map and I showed it to father. Then we found the buried treasure. Look, grandpa, there’s a lot of money in here!” He spilled the coins out onto the table and they glinted in the light.

Philip sighed. He had worked in the fields many hours growing crops to earn that money. He smiled at his grandson. “There is a lot of money in here. What will you do with all of that money?”

“Father says we have to save it for a rainy day. Do you think it will rain tomorrow, grandpa?”

“I think your father means a rainy day far in the future, Amos.”

Amos sighed in turn. “I hope it rains tomorrow, Grandpa. I want to buy a new train.

December 1864

“It is a pity that Grandpa isn’t here so I can tell him I finally got my train ride.” Amos smiled weakly as he got off the train and his father Josh and wife Kate helped him navigate his crutches through the snow. He looked around the small depot. “It’s good to be home. How are the children? And the farm?”

“The children are thriving as much as children can thrive on a farm. They will smile much wider when they see you again,” Kate said.

Amos smiled at Josh. “And you, Papa. Are you doing well? I want to visit Mama’s grave before we go home.”

They dug the snow off Sarah’s grave in the cemetery on Golden Hill and Amos stood with his hat on his heart for a few moments, remembering. When the horse and buggy pulled up to the farmhouse door, Amos wiped tears from his face as he hugged his children. He toured his farm for the first time in three years and congratulated Kate on doing an excellent job of managing the farm while he was gone. Kate put her arm around Josh. “Papa helped me out a lot and so did the boys,” she said. “After all Paul is six and Philip is eight. That’s plenty old enough for farm work.”

“The farm is doing well, even under the snow. I am a lucky soldier to come back home and to a prosperous home at that.”

Amos had enlisted in the First New York Cavalry Regiment the first year of the war and had been wounded in October 1864 at the Battle of Cedar Creek in the Shenandoah Valley. The Army surgeons had to amputate his right foot because gangrene had set in and he had spent three weeks in the hospital in Washington D.C before he arrived home in time for Christmas.

Amos felt well enough to help Kate and his sons cut a Christmas tree in the woods and bring it into the parlor and decorate it. As the winter wore on he discovered that he could help the boys and his father with the milking and egg gathering, but he couldn't pitch hay or muck out the barn. He would start the heavier chores in the spring he promised himself, but when spring came he hadn't regained enough of his strength to be able to work a full farm day without having to take a nap in the afternoon. "I've got to get my full strength back," he told Kate one spring evening as they got ready for bed. "Papa and the boys are you are still doing too many chores."

Kate hugged him. "I don't care how many chores I have to do or how many chores the boys have to do. I don't even mind having your father help us! You're back from the war alive and that's the most important thing!"

Sometimes Amos wondered how useful he was to his family. He would have much rather come home unwounded and able to work the schedule he used to work, but he was home with his family. Many of the men in his company hadn't made it home alive.

For the next decade Amos managed to work the farm with the help of his family, but his health continued to deteriorate. He had acquired chronic diarrhea during his war service as well as being wounded and both conditions took more of a toll on his body as the years rolled along. After Josh died, it became even harder to keep up with the farm work. Amos knew he couldn't have done it without Kate and the boys. In the summer of 1875, the Meade family received a visit from a Mr. Boyd of the Government Lighthouse Service. The government wanted to buy their farm to use as a site for a lighthouse on Thirty Mile Point. After much discussion Amos and Kate decided to sell the farm, especially since neither Paul nor Philip wanted to be farmers. Paul wanted to be a minister and Philip a teacher. Both were going to college and left no one but

Amos and Kate to run the farm. Selling the farm seemed to be the logical and the most profitable thing for them to do.

Amos noted with interest what Mr. Boyd told them about the lighthouse. It was to be called Thirty Mile Light because Thirty Mile Point was exactly thirty miles from place the Niagara River emptied into Lake Ontario. The light was built to mark a sandbar and shoal offshore which had claimed vessels like the Ontario and the Mary. The tower was seven feet high and the government installed a third order Fresnel lens which made the light visible for sixteen miles. The lantern was lit by kerosene until 1885 when it became one of the first light houses to be illuminated by electricity. Mr. Boyd delighted Amos even more when with the authorization of the government he offered Amos the position of first keeper of the light. Amos accepted and he and Kate went to live in the single family keeper's dwelling.

December 1886

Amos held the tarnished silver coins out to Kate. "I found these when I was walking around on the beach. Grandpa must have forgotten some of the loot he buried."

She took the coins and put them in a glass jar on the shelf above the iron cook stove. "How do you know your Grandpa buried it?" Kate asked him as she poured him a steaming cup of coffee to ward off the December chill.

"He told my father that he did and my father told me about it before he died."

“Kate smiled at him and he noted that the winter sunlight streaming through the windows made a halo around her blond hair. “You still look like an angel after all of these years,” he told her.

Kate acted like an angel and an entire company of angels watched over them that night. That cold December night a ship, he later discovered it was the Elizabeth, went aground on the shoal off of Thirty Mile Point. One of the sailors drowned, but Amos and Kate managed to throw out a line and pull the other three crew members to safety. Kate hurried ahead to pile more quilts and goose down comforters on their bed and on the divan in the parlor. She pulled a trundle bed into the kitchen and put it by the stove. They bundled the three nearly frozen sailors into the beds and Kate gave them several cups of warm tea each.

The man on the trundle bed in the kitchen turned out to be the captain, Captain Kyle Masterson, he told them. His ship, the Elizabeth, had been hauling wheat, apples and corn and according to the Captain, “didn’t carry a scrap of insurance. I took a chance on Lake Ontario and lost this time,” he mourned.

Kate and Amos tended the other two sailors for the rest of the night, but the Captain Masterson thawed out to the point of making his own coffee and frying his own breakfast pancakes by morning. When Kate bustled into the kitchen to fix breakfast, he greeted her with a steaming batch of pancakes.

“I used a bit of my own wheat,” he bragged. “I found a bag of it washed up on the beach.”

“I’ll take over now if you want to rest,” Kate told him.

“I have to work hard and build up some capital again,” the Captain said “I’ve got a lot of goods to pay for.”

“But you and your crew are alive. That’s capital,” Kate told him.

Captain Masterson sighed. “So true, but coinage helps as well.”

Kate reached up to the shelf above the stove and handed him the jar of tarnished silver coins. “Buried Treasure,” she told him.

Oswego Light

During the Nineteenth Century, Oswego grew into a bustling commercial port and a breakwater was constructed on the West side of the river to help protect the harbor. In 1836, a new lighthouse was constructed at the end of this pier. The lighthouse was of an octagonal shape with an attached oil room and it housed a third order Fresnel lens that produced a constant white beacon with a fourteen mile visibility. When this lighthouse was dismantled a second lighthouse was built in 1889 when the second breakwater for the harbor was built. It stood until 1934 when a new lighthouse was built and a one story keeper's quarters was added in 1936. It stands at the end of a 2,000 foot long breakwater at the mouth of the Oswego River which extends five miles out into Lake Ontario…

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt authorized the War Refugee Board to operate the Fort Ontario Emergency Refugee Shelter for European Refugees in Oswego, New York from August 1944-June 1945. By his "invitation", approximately 987 mostly Jewish refugees settled at Fort Ontario and when the war ended, most of them became American citizens."

This story happened in imagination.

Swimming in Frozen Water

"This is a land of cold hearts and cold weather," Adam said to his friend Priscilla as they stepped onto the Oswego, New York breakwater a few bitterly cold days before Christmas, 1944.

"Cold water too!" Priscilla laughed, dodging the drops of Lake Ontario water raining from the waves that crashed against the cement wall.

“Did you wear a warm enough coat?” Priscilla scanned his blue wool coat and the brown knit cap that had come from one of the refugee bags that the churches in Oswego regularly donated to the Fort Ontario Shelter. Adam’s brown hair stuck out from under the cap like icicles. She tightened the scarf around his neck and bent to make certain that his black galoshes with the silver latches were fastened securely.

Adam shivered but his brown eyes glowed warm as he studied Priscilla. “I am never warm in this place,” he said. “Are you warm enough?” He reached over and made sure that the red buttons on her coat were buttoned against the cold. He retied the strings of her hat and made sure that her galoshes were fastened.

“Will we survive this new land, Priscilla?” Adam was certain that he would not.

“We have survived so much already, why shouldn’t we survive here? Priscilla was certain that they would survive if they chose to survive.

‘The camp, the fence. They make it difficult to survive.” Adam stopped and stared out at the ice fields on the lake that reminded him of the top of the strawberry ices that he and Josie and Mama and Papa used to buy after a ride on the carousel. They would laugh at the strawberry drops dripping down their chin and Mama would take a handkerchief from her pocketbook and wipe their chins clean. They Nazi’s had wiped out the lives of Mama, Papa, and Josie as neatly and efficiently as Mama had wiped the strawberry ice from their chins. Adam had survived because he had been sent to a Buchenwald to work as a forced laborer in an I.G. Farben factory instead of Auschwitz to be killed.

Priscilla Weisenthaler touched his arm. A Christian family had sheltered her and her parents in a secret room in their attic before a network of Christian smugglers had helped them

make their way to Naples, Italy in 1944. From there, the Weisenthalers had boarded the Henry Gibbins, a ship that the United States had sent to pick up 1,000 mostly Jewish refugees that the War Refugee Board had pledged to save from the Nazis. "Adam, your memories are darker than mine so I can understand why your hopes are dark too. But let us look to the lighthouse for hope."

They both stood and stared at the lighthouse, a solid, colorful finger pointing at the sky. Then they walked out a few more yards on the break wall. Adam remembered the warm Italian air that smelled of grapes and wine and fragrant Mediterranean breezes. This air slapped him in the face and snapped him into a reality he didn't always want to face.

"It is the fence, Priscilla. The camp had fences. This camp has a fence."

"The fence at Fort Ontario let's people out as well as in, Adam. Consider Sundays when people are coming and going, working and visiting. The path under the fence is like a highway."

"I know that Priscilla, but it is still a fence."

"Not to the same degree as a European fence, Adam."

"They don't want us here, Priscilla."

"Who is they, Adam?"

"The people who live here in Oswego. Some of them don't want us here. The other day at School Two a boy hit me and told me to go back where I came from. I want to go back, Priscilla. I want to go back and curse and kick Germans when the war is over. I might even kill one for my Mama, one for my Papa, and one for Josie."

"They don't all want us here, but most of them do, Priscilla told him. "Remember how that boy handed you a bicycle over the fence? Remember how they met us at the train with milk and cookies?"

"Remember how someone painted swastikas on the back door at school? Remember how they wouldn't let us out of camp for a month while they figured out what to do with us, while they tried to discover if we were spies?"

"Adam, we must make our lives here. They will see that we are not spies, but just people who want a life."

"What about the people whose lives were stolen, like my family?"

"The best way to avenge them is to survive, Adam, not to kill for them and be killed yourself."

Adam walked a few steps ahead of her, kicking the snow that was rapidly accumulating on the break wall walk. "They think I am stupid because I don't speak English well."

Priscilla grabbed his elbow. "Slow down, Adam. The walk is getting slippery. We had better turn back."

Adam shivered. "The barracks in camp were so cold that I saw my breath every morning, but I still heard my Mama's voice calling me to get up and get ready for school. And remember, we live in barracks, Priscilla. Mr. Smart said that soldiers from their army used to live here."

"Yes, we live in barracks, but our barracks here aren't cold, Adam. We have coal stoves and plenty of coal. My Papa helps deliver coal every morning."

“Your Papa is here. Mine isn’t.”

“I am thankful for that, Adam. Can I share my Papa with you?”

“He has been kind to me, Priscilla. He is teaching me how to bake bread in the bakery. Perhaps when the war is over I will practice a trade back in Europe.”

“I’m staying here, Adam.”

“Here! What will you do here?”

“I will go to college and become a teacher. The war has taught me much. I can teach much.”

“They won’t listen to us, Priscilla. They will look away because they won’t want to remember the suffering and the sacrifice that were required of us and not of them.”

“I talked to Mrs. Hanover. Her son was killed at Anzio.”

“That’s one son, not millions of sons.”

“It is the one son that matters to her, Adam.”

“We can’t do anything against hate and war, Priscilla.”

“We can fight against them with education and understanding.”

“Education!" My Papa taught at the university, but that didn’t matter because he was Jewish.”

Adam, hatred clouds everything and they hated us. That doesn’t mean what their hatred tells them is true. And that doesn’t mean that English is the only language of intelligence!”

“Words, words, just words, Priscilla. Try these words! I am going to climb to the top of the lighthouse.”

“Adam, why do you want to do that? You said we were going to walk, not climb. Besides, it is too dangerous.”

Just as she spoke, her feet slipped out from under her and Adam had to grab her and hold on tight to keep her from toppling off the break wall into the water. He turned her around and pointed her toward the shore. “We aren’t too far out yet, Priscilla, and the water is not yet deep. But it is cold. If you fall in you will freeze before you can get back to the barracks. Go back now while you are still safe from freezing!”

“I’m not turning back until you do. “We’re in this together.”

Adam kept walking, his face turned toward the lighthouse. Dusk light had begun to gather over the lake, and the keeper had lit the light. It shone as bright and steady over the darkening lake as hope through the darkness of despair. Priscilla followed him, grabbing his elbow. “Adam, we need to turn back.”

“We hid in a light house on the coast of Holland for a year before we moved on,” Adam said.

“How can one hide in a lighthouse? It seems so obvious a hiding place,” Priscilla said.

“A lighthouse has many secret places. During the day the keeper hid us in a room in the cellar. At night after he lit the lamp we would come out and help him do lighthouse chores. In the summertime we would go down to the beach and swim in the moonlight. The moonlight shining on the dark water made me want to swim up it like it was a ladder to freedom.”

"You said 'we.' Who was with you Adam?"

"Paul was with me, Priscilla."

"And what…."

"We ate and slept and swam and hid from the Nazis and lived. Sometimes we had fun. Then one day in the daylight they came looking for us. Someone who lived in the village must have suspected the light keeper was hiding someone. They told the Nazis to look for us. We were swimming and taking a bath at the same time when they shot Paul. I grabbed him and treaded water while I kept him afloat. I was determined to pull him back to the lighthouse so the keeper could help him."

"What happened, Adam?"

"We didn't make it together. I swam for about fifty yards and then Paul died."

Priscilla touched his face. "I'm sorry, Adam."

"I'm sorry, Paul." Adam pulled off his woolen cap and put it over his heart. "I couldn't save him!" He put the hat up to his face and sobbed into it.

"You had no choice, Adam. Paul was dead. You had to let him go."

"He was my friend and I couldn't save him."

"You saved yourself to live for him and the others. That's all a survivor can do."

Adam stared at the water surrounding them on all sides. For a moment he imagined that he saw Paul's face looking up at him and his eyes sending him a message as clearly as the

lighthouse lens. What was the message? Should he live or should he join Paul? Did it make any difference whether the water was Lake Ontario or the North Sea?"

He leaned closer to Paul's face, hoping to read the answers in his eyes. He felt Priscilla's hand on his arm.

"It's getting dark and it's snowing harder. We should turn around," Priscilla said.

Adam put his gloved hand in front of his eyes and squinted through the snow. It felt wet and heavy on his face, like his memories felt on his heart. "I must get to the lighthouse. It's just a few steps further. I can see the light shining through the snow."

They both heard the shrill whistle and froze in mid step. Adam squared his shoulders, expecting the search light to sweep over them any minute. His ears strained to ear the shouts of the guards and the barking of the dogs. He listened for the whine of the bullets. He had to know which way to run. He had to keep Priscilla safe. His frantic gaze took in the ice fields around them. Where could they run? Perhaps they could find shelter in the lighthouse.

"Run!" he shouted, dragging Priscilla by the hand.

She hung on his arm like a lead weight. "We have nowhere to run, Adam. We have to turn and face the policeman."

"I will swim for my life as I did before," Adam panted. He tried to shake off her arm and jump into the water, but Priscilla hung on with the iron grip of necessity.

"Adam, there is nowhere to run expect toward the light house and the path is slippery."

"Then we will end up swimming in frozen water."

"Adam, frozen water turns into solid ice. We must turn and face the policeman before there is no turning back. I will turn and face him."

Priscilla turned and stood in front of Adam. She held out her arms, protecting him. Adam ducked out from under her protective windmill arms and stood beside her. The wind unfurled his woolen scarf that his friend from School Two in Oswego had given him like a flag, an American flag. Adam felt like a sturdy, strong American flagpole as he stood tall and faced the policeman.

"We have done nothing wrong," he said. The wind threw his words at the policeman and the snow stung his eyelids.

The policeman stared at them. "You're not supposed to be on the break water," he told them sternly. "This weather makes it dangerous and it's also restricted."

"I'm sorry, officer. We didn't realize we were doing anything wrong," Priscilla said.

Adam didn't say anything. He just glared belligerently at the policeman.

"Are you two from Oswego?" the policeman asked.

"We live at Ft. Ontario," Priscilla told him.

"Oh, you must be some of those European refugees!"

"Yes, we are. I am from Holland and Adam here is from Germany."

"Well, I just want you to know that you are welcome here in Oswego. My folks emigrated here from Germany in 1910. Went through Ellis Island, the whole thing." The policeman held out his hand. "I just want to personally welcome you."

Adam stared at the policeman's hand for a minute, and then he shook it. "Thank you for the welcome."

The policeman also shook Priscilla's hand. Then he pointed in the direction of the Fort. "You two need to go back to your barracks. The storm is getting worse."

Adam felt the thick snowflakes tangle in his eyelashes. He grabbed Priscilla's arm. "We must go back."

With Priscilla walking safely beside him, he turned around for one last look at the light. The snowflakes caressed his face with cool fingers. He stuck out his tongue to gather the snowflakes and he felt their cold taste shock him into the reality of hope.

Ecorse Light-Detroit River

The morning Charlie's body bobbed up at the foot of Southfield dock I stood there with my brother Eddie and our buddy Jack watching the sheriff pull him in.

"That ain't Charlie, " Eddie, my friend that lived in the Ecorse lighthouse said. "He's a lot smaller than that."

"Is too," I said. I see his red overalls and brown hair. Besides, Uncle Don says that when you've been in the water for a couple of days you swell up like that."

"Aw, what does Uncle Don know?" Eddie sneered.

"He knows a lot," I shouted. "He's a bootlegger, isn't he?"

Jack punched my arm. "Hey, shut up, Clara. You're not supposed to say that so loud."

Loud? It was so quiet that I heard the breeze from the Detroit River carrying faint notes of honky-tonk music from the Polar Bear Cafe and the Greenwillow Café at the water's edge People came to the riverfront all of the time. They never took the night off. It was so quiet that I heard Frenchy, the owner of the Polar Bear Cafe yelling at Yvette, his waitress, to hurry up. I knew that her real name was Rebecca Jones, not Yvette and that she had been born and raised here in Ecorse like I had been and had no more set foot in France than I had, but Frenchy's customers all called her Yvette and when they called her Yvette, she acted like a Yvette. Frenchy was probably having her help him cook his famous muskrat stew that he served every night at the Polar Bear Café. People came from as far away as Grand Haven on Lake Michigan and Toledo on Lake Erie and Oswego on Lake Ontario and Alpena on Lake Huron and even Sault Ste. Marie on Lake Superior to eat a plate of Frenchy's muskrat stew. One day last week I had watched a lady wearing a necklace that glittered like diamonds bending over her plate of muskrat stew. The fastener must have been loose or she must not have fastened it tight because the necklace fell off her neck and landed in the plate of stew. She just fished out the necklace, put it on the table, and kept eating without stopping to wipe it off.

Frenchy also told me that Ecorse is from a French word, Ecorces, that means river of bark and that Detroit is from a French word that means strait. I had two rivers to swim and wonder about, the Ecorse River of bark and the Detroit the strait. The muskrat didn't care which river they used as long as the river was good to them and both rivers were good to muskrat. So was Frenchy.

So was I. I came from as far away as Pitt Street, two blocks away, to eat my daily plate of muskrat stew. At first the thought of muskrat stew had made me wrinkle my nose and say "Ughh, don't put that in front of me." But Frenchy had carefully explained to me that muskrat

were clean animals that ate water plants from the river which was clean and that he took out all of the smelly parts before he cooked a muskrat. He convinced me to try one bite of his stew. I tried one bite and ate another bite and then another and before I knew it I had eaten the entire plate of muskrat stew. In turn, I had tried to convince Eddie to try muskrat stew. Eddie is hard to convince about anything. He wouldn't eat it. I didn't have to convince Jack because he's French like a lot of people here are and he already knew about muskrat. He even told me something about a Pope from a long time ago writing a letter saying that it was alright for the Catholic people in Ecorse to eat muskrat on Friday because sometimes that's all they had to eat. Jack and his father caught a lot of muskrat and sold them to Frenchy for his café. They also caught a lot of fish and used some for their own family and sold some to other people. Me and Eddie and my other brothers and Ma and Dad ate hamburger and hotdogs and spaghetti. Dad went fishing in the river a lot and he worked a lot for the city. But we always had food on the table.

"You know Uncle Don's a bootlegger, " Eddie said. The sheriff's working for the feds in Detroit and they're trying to put Uncle Don out of business."

"You don't know what you're talking about either way," I said. "The sheriff isn't going to catch Uncle Don and that's Charlie there in the water. It's his hair and it's his overalls. The water just made him bigger that's all. It's the same as when Ma puts skinny, shriveled dried apples in water and they plump up to the size of eggs."

"You're talking girl talk, now," Eddie taunted.

"Girl talk! You take that back! I'm not a girl!" I forgot Charlie and jumped on Eddie. I got him down in a hammer lock and it took Jack and the sheriff to pry me loose.

"You are a girl, sure as Charlie drowned in the river," the Sheriff told me. Now leave off Eddie and come and help me tell Charlie's mother that he's not coming home to her breathing and talking. Wonder what made him jump in the river? I know he wasn't in no boat and it don't look he was fishing either."

"I know what he was doing," I said. And I did know. I knew because lots of times I had gone along with Charlie and done the same thing. Charlie had five brothers and five sisters and even though his dad fished a lot and his mom sold eggs and chickens at the grocery store, Charlie got this hungry look in his eyes sometimes. One day when Charlie looked like that I told Frenchy that I didn't want any muskrat stew, but could he give Charlie my plate of stew. Frenchy gave us both a plate of muskrat stew and said that I could wash dishes to earn it. I washed dishes for Frenchy every Wednesday after school and all of Wednesday afternoon in the summer time.

But Charlie and I did other things to earn food money. At night lots of people from Ecorse would take their boats over to Canada and bring back cases of bootleg beer and whiskey and rum. Sometimes the fed agents, the sheriff probably included, would wait for them at Southfield Dock. When the boat owners saw the fed agents, they would dump their cases of booze in the river. Since the liquor was in bottles it floated and then it sank to the bottle of the river. Just the week before last me and Charlie had dove down ten feet at the dock and brought up ten bottles of booze.

"It's still good as new," Charlie said, wiping off one of the bottles on his flour sack shirt. "Ma says she needs some money for shoes and clothes for us all. I think I got enough here for that. The bootleggers line up for this stuff."

I thought about my five brothers, especially Emery who was sick and needed the special medicine that made Dad shake his head and count the pennies in our piggy banks. I thought about Dad and how he bought a Model A Ford from the Ford Company where he worked instead of giving all of the money to Ma for Emery's medicine. I stood on the edge of Southfield dock, my bare toes curled around the splintery wood. I peered down into the cool green river and I knew I saw those bottles of liquid money glittering at me. I jumped off the dock with Charlie close behind me. We ended up with about thirty bottles apiece that day, the day that I didn't know was the last day that Charlie and I would dive at the foot of Southfield Dock together.

I didn't think too much of it when Charlie didn't come around for a couple of days. In fact, I was glad he didn't. Ma was still trying to turn me into a girl and had forced me to sew a dress for two days. "It's time you stopped going around with that gang of boys. Clara," she said with tightness she gets when she bites off threads around her mouth. "You're a girl and you have to start acting like one. You go into eighth grade \next year, you know."

I knew. How achingly I knew. Eddie didn't like me anymore. We used to be such good buddies and now all he did was make fun of everything I said and tear down Uncle Don. Jack stuck up for me but that was just as bad because it singled me out for special treatment. All I wanted was for things to be the way they used to be. I just wanted to be one of the gang like I always had been. Most of all I wanted Charlie to get up from that dock, wring out his wet shirt, slick down his hair, and walk the three blocks to his house with me. I didn't want Charlie to just lay there smelling under the hot sun with more and more people gathering to stare at him.

But I stood and stared at Charlie for a long time myself, waiting for him to open his eyes and grin at me. "It was just a joke, Clara," he would say. Let's sell our bottles of booze and stop for a soda at Liggett's Drug Store. "

I stared at Charlie with all of the hope I had in my soul, but he didn't open his eyes or his mouth to say the words I so wanted to hear. Instead, the Baldwin Funeral Home hearse came and took Charlie away.

I wore the new dress that Ma forced me to make to his funeral. Ma insisted that I finish the dress in time for the funeral. I argued with her. "Ma, Charlie knows me better in my overalls and shirt. That's how I always dressed when we went around together,"

"Clara, it's fitting that you wear your best dress to Charlie's funeral."

"I can't finish it in time, anyway, Ma. There's not enough material for a full skirt."

"Clara, you have one day to finish your dress. Charlie's funeral is tomorrow and you are wearing the dress whether it is finished or not."

She slapped several cut out pattern pieces on my lap. "I don't like the color, Ma."

"What's wrong with black, Clara?"

"Charley always wore red overalls and a red polo shirt, Ma."

"The people at the funeral will be wearing black, Clara. The ladies at the Presbyterian Church will wear black and Reverend Ames will be wearing black when he preaches Charlie's funeral sermon. You should wear black as well, Clara."

"Charlie liked the red dresses that the ladies at the Polar Bear Café wore."

"There is a time for a red dress and a time for black dress, Clara."

"I think Charlie's funeral is a red dress time, Ma."

"And I say it's a black dress time, Clara. Women's lives run on a narrow thread and often it is a black thread." She patted the dress pieces in my lap firmly and pointed to the sewing machine.

I sat at Ma's Singer Sewing machine and wrestled with that black dress for the rest of the day. I managed to sew it together but it didn't hang right on me. The front dipped a few inches lower than the back did and it was way too big in the waist. I didn't even look at myself in the mirror it felt so bad. "Just imagine you're wearing your red overalls and your plaid shirt," I kept telling myself at Charlie's funeral. "Just imagine that Charlie is wearing his red overalls and red polo shirt

Charlie's mother dressed him in a black suit and black tie that I didn't even know he owned. Ma was right about black on the outside, but on the inside I knew that Charlie was really dressed in his red overalls and red polo shirt.

I didn't cry at Charlie's funeral. I kept thinking about the black dress and how ugly I felt in it. When I felt my thoughts zooming in on Charlie, I fiercely pulled them back to the black dress. I hugged his mother and shook his father's hand but I felt numb like I had fallen into freezing winter Detroit River or anyone of the lakes it connects. Jack and Eddie wiped tears from their eyes during Charlie's funeral sermon, but I didn't feel anything. I just pleated the folds of my black dress with my fingers.

After we got back from Charlie's funeral, I rushed upstairs and tore off the black dress and put on my red overalls. Then I tiptoed downstairs and sneaked past the living room where Ma and Dad were listening to the radio. The Model A wasn't in the driveway, which surprised me because I had seen Dad in the living room, but I didn't think about the car anymore. I wasn't wearing the black dress to hate and my grief for Charlie washed over like the swift river current.

Blindly I headed toward the river and the Polar Bear Café. Frenchy didn't ask questions. He just put his arm around me and led me to the sink full of dirty dishes. I washed and washed for I don't know how long, but I couldn't wash away the pain and guilt inside me. The only way I could wash it away was with river water from the spot where Charlie and I always dove. Making my way out of the Polar Bear Café by now full of music and dancing and drinking patrons, I hurried past the Greenwillow Café which was even louder and smokier than the Polar Bear Café. A man smelling like booze staggered into me and muttered, "Want a date, baby?"

I pushed him away and kept walking toward the dock. There were usually cars parked on Jefferson Avenue next to the dock so I didn't pay any attention to the two that were there. I stumbled past them on my way to the end of the dock and the dive that I intended to make when I heard somebody calling me.

"Clara! Wait Up!"

I kept going. I wasn't sure what I was going to do, but I knew I had to tell Charlie that I was sorry for not warning him about the river. Just the other day, Frenchy had told me about the time he had gotten caught in the current and had to hang onto a log to get safely back to shore.

"Clara, wait for me!"

I spun around. “What do you want, Eddie?”

“I asked you where you were going.”

“I’m going to find Charlie.”

“You’re going in the wrong direction. The cemetery is over on Third Street.”

“I’m going to dive like we used to do and find him.”

“Clara, you’re crazy. You can’t dive and find him.”

“Watch me,” I said, pulling off my shoes and rolling up my pant legs.

I was just about in the water when Eddie grabbed me by the straps of my overalls and pulled me back. I kicked his legs and flailed my arms at him.

“Let me go. I need to find Charlie” I hollered at him.

Eddie opened the door of our Model A and threw me on the front seat. “You can sit with me until you calm down,” he said, getting in beside me.

I cried and cried. I don’t know for how long, but I cried and cried.

Eddie patted me on the back. “Clara, Charlie wouldn’t want you to cry like this,” he said.

“It was my fault,” I sobbed. “I went into the river with him and we both collected the bottles of booze. If I hadn’t dove with him he’d still be alive.”

“He was making money for his family,” Eddie said. “You couldn’t have stopped him from doing that. He would have done anything for his family.”

"It was my fault, I made him do it," I sobbed.

"Clara, you wore a black dress to Charlie's funeral even though you know that red is his color just because you didn't want to hurt Ma. Don't you think he felt the same way about his family?"

"Y—y—yes," I agreed but I couldn't stop sobbing. I think I got Eddie worried because he finally said, "Look, what we need is a drink. I mean, I need a drink of a bootleg bottle and you need a drink of soda pop." He pulled one of Ma's old red checkered tablecloths out from under the seat. He opened the tablecloth and pulled out two bottles wrapped in brown paper. He handed me a bottle. He waited while I put the bottle to my lips and then he raised his own bottle. "One, two, three, have one on me," he said. "Drink up," he told me.

I took a big gulp of soda pop and it burned all of the way down my throat. When it landed in my stomach it felt like it had started a fire and pretty soon I started to sweat. Then the warmth spread up into my heart and brain and I didn't feel so bad about Charlie anymore. In fact, I saw Charlie peeking in the window and winking at me, his old "I dare you to come out and play" wink.

I decided to take Charlie up on his last dare. I put down my bottle of soda and picked up Ma's red and white checkered tablecloth. I wrapped it around me and I opened the door of the Model A. Eddie didn't try to stop me. He just sat there with his eyes closed. The full moon glowed like a yellow ball, like our living room lamp that Dad turned on every night so he could read the paper. It trailed yellow fingers of light across the water, fingers that touched my heart and pulled me close, closer. I wrapped the red and white checkered tablecloth around me and fished a rope out of the back seat of the Model A. I tied the rope tightly around my waist and I

was ready to go. I clambered up on the hood of the Model A and I started to dance to the moon light. I swayed in unison with the wind, with the Detroit River water that was made up of water from all of the Great Lakes, in time to the music escaping faintly from the waterfront cafes. I danced to the memories of love and hate and friendship and family. I danced for Charlie. I saw him standing in front of me wearing his red overalls, holding out his arms to me. "Dance with me," he said. He'd never asked me to dance before. I closed my eyes and moved into his arms. They didn't feel wet from the river, they felt dry and warm and welcoming like Ma's kitchen on a cold and rainy day. Charlie and I danced a slow dance and when the music stopped, he kissed me on the forehead.

"I'll love you forever, Charlie," I whispered.

"I'll love you forever Clara," he whispered.

"I'll come with you," I said. "I want to come with you now."

He shook his head no. He wouldn't let me follow him.

Then I opened my eyes. A ring of people, mostly men, surrounded our Model A Ford. They were clapping and a few of them threw pennies at me.

"More baby, more" a man yelled, waving a bottle.

"Dance faster, baby faster," another one yelled, pulling on the edge of my tablecloth. He tugged at it again and it parted, revealing the overalls that I wore underneath it.

"Take off the tablecloth, take off the tablecloth," the man with the bottle shouted.

“Charlie, come back,” I whispered. “Will you come back if I close my eyes? Will you come back if I kiss you on the lips?”

I closed my eyes, held out my arms, and puckered my lips, willing him to reappear. He didn’t but the men moved closer. The one with the bottle held it out to me. “Have a drink baby,” he said.

“I don’t want a drink. I’m going home,” I told him. I jerked the table cloth out of his hand and started to climb down off of the hood of the Model A. I felt rough hands grab me.

“Leaving kind of early aren’t you?” the man with the bottle sneered. I smelled the booze on his breath.

I didn’t answer him. I just bit his hand as hard as I could and he let me go in a hurry. I jumped in the car and dug Eddie hard in the ribs. “Let’s get out of here,” I said.

Eddie rubbed his eyes. “Huh?”

“We need to go home, now.”

The man with the bottle tried to open the car door. I grabbed the bottle from beside Eddie and shook it at the man and his face disappeared from the window.

Eddie was wide awake now. “What’s going on?” he said.

“I want to go home,” I said.

He started the car. “We’re going.

I pulled a loose red thread from Ma's red and white checkered table cloth. It was a broad and long red thread, much bigger and wider than her black thread. I intended to wave it gently under her nose as soon as Eddie and I walked in the door.