

The Silence of Sorrowful Hours

by

April Kutger

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From

“The Blue and the Gray”

by

Francis Miles Finch

BY the flow of the inland river,
Whence the fleets of iron have fled,
Where the blades of the grave-grass quiver,
Asleep are the ranks of the dead.

• • •

From the silence of sorrowful hours
The desolate mourners go,
Lovingly laden with flowers
Alike for the friend and the foe.

• • •

So, when the summer calleth,
On forest and field of grain,
With an equal murmur falleth
The cooling drip of the rain.

In September, the clammy heat was more oppressive and the sound of sluggish flies bzzzz-ing in ever-widening circles was more monotonous. The smells of ripe apples, horse droppings, and lime from the garbage dump were dragged on the wind. But in September, as well, a soft morning breeze could carry the scent of wheat chaff as it floated across her face, her eyes closed fast not to lose the dream. All of it conspired to remind her of years of Septembers. Memories were held in the senses, and, in September,

Angelise felt them most. Osborne had gone to war in September. She pushed up the loose strands of damp hair that had fallen out of the combs holding her bun in place.

#

Ethan knew it was the farm. The smaller Engle house on the Hanover Pike and the Hoffman farmhouse 50 yards beyond it were situated in the same positions. But what had been fields of ripened wheat, oats and soybeans were turned over to grassy pastures for mares and tawny foals almost as big as their mothers. The dirt path – dust in the summer, mud in the spring – was a graveled lane lined with elms. Judging by their size, they must have been planted soon after he left.

As he approached the house he could see it truly was the one he had lived in, but it was painted dark green like the oval sign on the road that announced the “Hoffmann Horse Farm”. Green-roofed, white stables large enough to hold two dozen horses surrounded the old, red bankbarn. As the buggy drew closer, Ethan saw a tall woman with straight back and square shoulders rise from a peacock blue rocking chair. Was it Angelise? Was the chair the one she had kept in the cabin all those years ago?

Chapter 1

When Ethan stepped down from the carriage on that September day in 1900, Angelise Lindstrom's first thought was, He's an old man. She caught herself and smiled; she was almost as old as he.

Rising from her rocker, she pushed a wisp of her mostly white hair behind her ear. "Ethan McElhannon, I would know you anywhere! Come up here." She held out her arms as he reached the porch stairs. "I'll get Annie to bring us some tea with chipped ice."

Ethan was still tall and thin, but his shoulders were rounded and his step was slower. His hairline had receded and his woolly hair was as white as snow. He wore a sober black suit and shiny black boots. Angelise called through the screen door for the tea.

"Miss Angelise, it's been a long time," Ethan said, using the handrail to steady himself up the steps. "And I'm Ethan Freeman now."

"Freeman. I like that. It's much better than McElhannon. But don't call me 'Miss Angelise'. I didn't like it then and I still don't," she scolded.

"Sorry," he laughed. "I should have known that would get you riled."

She laughed along with him as she thought back to the first time he called her "Miss Angelise." It was more than forty years since they had first met at her cabin by the creek. Another hot September day. Seven months before the Confederacy fired on Fort Sumter. Three years before Gettysburg.

#

Osborne introduced Ethan to Angelise in the cabin he had rebuilt for her by Plum Run along the eastern edge of their farm. The runaway slave with nettles in his matted hair and thorny scratches on his face and hands had been on the road for five days. He was tired, hungry, scared and dirty – a pungent odor emanated from his unwashed clothes. When Angelise tried to embrace him, he pulled back. Looking at the floor, trying to diminish his size by slumping, he stammered, "Pa... pa... pleased... pleased to... to... to meet you, ma... ma'am."

"My name is Angelise," she answered, smiling.

He shook his head and looked at her with contrition like a reprimanded child. "Mi... Mi... Miss Angelise," he said.

"Angelise," she reiterated. She stepped back from him but kept smiling, focusing her arctic blue eyes on his frightened ones.

Angelise pushed a wisp of her curly, honey-blond hair behind her ear. She was almost as tall as he but slim as a boy. Her skin was tanned and freckled, and her hair was streaked buttery by the sun. Ethan figured she was about sixteen; he wondered how she got so tall.

#

While they talked distractedly about Ethan's train journey, Annie brought the tea and some butter cookies on a large black Toleware tray. The screen door slammed behind her.

"Scuse me," said the girl with sparkling blue eyes.

"I wish you could find a way to not do that, Annie."

"Sorry, Mémé." Annie performed a small, but playful curtsy.

"Ruth Anne, this is Mr. Mac... Mr. Freeman," Angelise said. "He lived here a long time ago." Annie's eyes widened, but she did what was expected, she curtsied and smiled as she nodded her head at the old Negro man with a barely perceptible scar across his eye. "Ethan, Ruth Anne is the granddaughter of Mariabella."

"Oh, my lord. Mari's child."

"Grandchild," Angelise corrected.

"How time passes us by," said Ethan, a bit embarrassed. "I can hardly believe I'm seeing Mariabella's grandchild." Looking at the girl, he said, "You put me in mind of the man who used to own this farm, Miss Ruth Anne. Your hair," he said, patting the side of his own head. Annie's long, wavy hair had a rich, mink brown color. "Your smile."

"I hate my teeth," Ruth Anne said. She thought they were too big, showed too much gum when she smiled.

"But your smile is pretty and your dimples are so like Osborne's." Ethan stopped. He looked at Angelise. "Don't they remind you of him?" he asked.

Angelise didn't reply, but instead reprimanded the girl. "Please, Annie, don't say 'hate'."

"Yes, Mémé," Ruth Anne said, giving another small curtsy as she turned to go back into the house.

"Don't let it slam," Angelise said as the door slammed. "That child!" she said frowning at Ethan.

“But you love her.”

“With all my heart.”

“My, my, my,” Ethan said, shaking his head at the old woman sitting next to him. They were on the porch of the farmhouse where treachery and mourning had taken place so many years ago. Angelise looked the same, except the color of her hair, and she had a bit more flesh on her bones. Her eyes were still as surprising as the blue winter sky after nothing but gray for days.

The three-story, dormered farmhouse looked the same except for the color of the paint. Made of stone, mortar and wood, it had withstood generations and the storms of many seasons. There was no sign of disrepair about the old house – no chipped paint, no worn boards, no cracking mortar between the stones. The trellis on the side porch was still shaded by morning glory. In those days, in the summer, they ate their dinners in its shade. With an evening breeze and protection from the day’s setting sun, it was cool and the smell of the purple-blue flowers showered down on them as they ate.

“What about you, Ethan? Do you have grandchildren?”

“Oh, yes. Plenty of grandchildren. Fifteen,” he said, smiling broadly.

“Goodness gracious, man, you must be proud as a rooster on a one-rooster chicken farm.” She paused. Then, in a somber voice, she said, “I’m sorry about your wife.”

“She had a good long life.” Ethan took a moment to control the quivering of his chin. “She got to play with most of the little ones. Some not so little now.”

“I wish I had met her.”

“She did not like Texas, no she didn’t,” he said, looking back in time. “But the New Mexico air agreed with her. And she loved that River Grandy.”

“And you? Are you still working?”

“No. Colonel Anthony gave me a nice pension a few years back. And the rooms above the carriage house – for as long as I live...”

“Do any of the children or grandchildren live with you?”

“Our youngest, Nathaniel, stayed with us ‘til my wife passed.”

“We have so much to catch up on,” Angelise said, pushing a loose curl behind her ear. She stood up; she wanted to put off the harder conversations. “Let me show you to your room. Maybe you’d like to freshen up or take a nap before supper.”

“Don’t mind if I do, Miss Angelise. I’ve been on that train since early this mornin’ – and quite a few days more since I left Albuquerque.”

Angelise opened the door and ushered Ethan into the cool dark house whose walls whispered the secrets spoken there.

#

“I hope you’ll be comfortable here. There’s fresh water in the pitcher and there’s a hand towel here.” She picked up the hand-embroidered flannel folded on the marble-topped washstand.

“This was Nelson’s room,” Ethan said. “And this bed looks like one I’ve slept in before,” Ethan smiled.

“It very likely is, *mon ami*,” she said. “It has new feathers and cover, of course,” she added.

“Thank the good Lord for that,” he said.

Angelise’s head snapped around to face him, but when she saw Ethan’s broad grin, she laughed. “I forgot how mocking you could be.”

“I meant no disrespect,” he said, returning her laughter, easing the awkwardness of their first moments with each other after thirty-five years.

“None taken, sir.” Angelise moved toward the door. “I’ll leave you now. The water closet’s at the end of the hall and there’s a new bathroom next to it, if you want a bath. Let me know and I’ll start the fire for the water.”

“I’m sure I can light the stove, ma’am.” Angelise grated at the “ma’am”. It made her feel old and slightly patronized.

“The water’s pumped in now and the toilet flushes.”

“Good to know you’re keepin’ up with the times,” he said with a grin.

Angelise smirked and turned to leave.

Before she could close the door, Ethan spoke up. “Angelise, I need to know, if you don’t mind, is Mariabella still alive?”

“No.” Angelise closed the door behind her.

Ethan’s heart stumbled; he put his hand to it to steady its flow.

“He’s a very old man, Mémé.” Annie said when Angelise told her they would be napping.

“Not much older than me, Chérie.”

“Well he looks it.”

“He’s had a hard life,” Angelise said with a stern expression.

“Sorry, Mémé.”

“It’s all right. Now, don’t disturb me for at least two hours.”

“Yes, Mémé.”

“Don’t slam the door, if you go out.”

“Yes, Mémé.”

“Set the table and...”

“Mémé...” Annie whined.

“Set the table.”

“Yes, Mémé.”

After washing and using the toilet, Ethan removed his boots and braces and hung his new suit jacket over the back of a wooden chair by the window. He placed his new hat – a small brimmed black felt hat he had bought in Harrisburg right before boarding the train for Gettysburg – on a hook inside the wardrobe.

Angelise had never seen Ethan in a suit and the only hat he wore in those days was an old one Osborne had given him. He almost lost it when he went to Maryland to cut the telegraph wires at a train depot on the Baltimore & Ohio line. That was the last time Ethan tried to get Dinah and his daughters. It was a secondary reason for their mission, but it was the part he had pinned his hopes on.

Ethan removed his shirt collar and then his new white shirt. Using a hangar from the wardrobe, he hung the shirt on the latch of the open window, hoping it would dry before dinner. He had soaked it through from the heat and his nerves. He smelled it to see if it could make it through dinner. Sitting in the floral slipcovered chair next to the west-

facing window, he unlaced and pulled off his boots. This simple, familiar act set his mind back to the day he had first arrived at the Hoffmann farm in 1858.

Chapter 2

Ethan stood up and pushed the reeds to either side of him. He had walked along the creek for an hour. Before that, he had crossed the wide part where there was a small island in the middle, just north of a small town. The current wasn't dangerous in the late summer so he had made it without much effort. He wasn't a good swimmer and didn't look forward to dying from drowning after all he'd been through for the past thirteen months. He had miles to go before he would find the fork in the creek and then the small cabin set almost on top of it. He had seen the axe mark on a tree twenty-five yards back, but he had heard voices and had ducked into the reeds.

He took a few steps toward the cabin, then stopped. He whistled, the multiple-toned sound of a wood rush. Lise and Osborne were on the porch, sitting on the floor, leaning against the rails, laughing. Out of the corner of his eye, Osborne saw someone crouching just beyond the bee flats. He held Lise's arm and gave her a small nod so she would keep still. He got up and swung himself over the rail. Ethan ducked down.

"It's all right," Osborne said. "You're at the right place." The tall, slim farmer walked toward Ethan with the friendly but formal bearing of the Quakers he had met in Philadelphia. He put his big hand out toward the cowering fellow in the bush. His strength, when he pulled Ethan forward, made Ethan think twice about taking advantage of his pleasant nature. As Ethan stood, he wondered if he truly was in the right place, but there was nothing he could do about it now.

"I'm Osborne Hoffmann," the lanky man said. His smile revealed dimples that creased his cheeks. He had a high forehead, and when he pushed back his wavy brown hair, he revealed a hairline that formed a "v" at the front of his forehead.

Not meeting his eye, Ethan mumbled his name.

"Come here, brother." Osborne motioned for Ethan to follow him. When he opened the front door of the cabin, Lise was standing on the threshold with open arms. Ethan didn't know what to do, but Lise grabbed his hands and pulled him to her, giving him a warm embrace. She almost gagged when she caught the rancid odor emanating from his unwashed clothes.

"Welcome to my little home," she said. "It is your home until you're on your way again." She reached her hand to Osborne; he squeezed it lightly, then let it drop.

When Ethan was still in the cabin a week later, Osborne asked Angelise about it.

"He wants to get his wife."

"Yes. But it's unlikely. And we could get entangled with the law. If we keep a Negro here, slave catchers might..."

“He doesn’t want to go farther. He wants to stay here and try to get her. Maybe send someone else for her. Maybe me.”

“Angelise, you can’t be...”

“Just let him stay a little while longer...”

“Very well. For a little while.”

Chapter 3

Angelise was tired. She was used to taking afternoon naps, but she was exceptionally tired this afternoon. Perhaps it was the days of expectation and, in some ways, the dread she had been feeling since she received Ethan's letter.

At the opposite end of the hall from where she had installed Ethan, Angelise laid on top of the light cotton summer spread that covered her bed. Her mind drifted back to when the Hoffmann farm had become a stop on the Underground Railroad, which eventually brought Ethan to them.

#

It was a steaming day; it felt like the weight of water pushed against every movement. A soundless breeze from the west bode a cooler evening and, perhaps, a break in the heat wave. Rushing breathlessly into Osborne's office, Angelise blurted, "I was out riding the old trail south of the creek, and I found an injured Negro wishing to go to Canada. He needs our help."

"Show me where he is," Osborne said without hesitation.

They rode together to the place where the trembling youth was propped up against a tree. He was cradling his useless left arm in his right. It was obvious it was broken; it was bent in the middle of the forearm. "What happened, young man?" Osborne asked.

"I'se broke ma arm. Can't feel ma fingers," the slim boy said, trying to hold back his tears. His amber color, wavy russet hair and hazel eyes put Osborne in mind of Angelise. She noticed it, too, and was more aware than ever that she could easily be suspected as mulatto if she lived in the South.

"What's your name, if I may ask?" Osborne said as he ripped the sleeve of the boy's shirt. "And how did you get yourself in this predicament?"

"Name's Joseph, but they call me Joby. I jumped from over there." He pointed to a rock jutting out from a slight rise in the earth.

"Trying to have some fun, were you?"

"No, suh," Joby said sheepishly. He gritted his teeth at Osborne's probing fingers. Angelise wanted to ease his pain, but didn't know what to do.

"I think both bones are broken. It will have to be set."

"I can't let no slave catcher find me," Joby said. "I'se in big trouble."

“We don’t want that either,” Angelise said. Curly wisps of her hair had pulled free from the ribbon attempting to hold her hair at her neck. She removed the ribbon and retied it after pulling all the loose pieces together.

“Suh, please leave me. I’d rather be free than have two good arms.”

“My manager has set animal bones. Could we bring him out to take a look?”

Joby looked at Angelise with fearful, questioning eyes. “You can trust us,” she said.

“Where did you come from, Joby?” Osborne asked.

“I’se not sayin’.”

“Very well.” Osborne turned and spoke quietly to Angelise. “You stay here. I’ll go for Mr. Engle.”

“Make sure he’s agreeable,” she said with firm look.

“I will. I’ll talk to him. See how he feels in general.”

After Osborne left, Angelise asked Joby if he wanted some water, though she didn’t want to leave him. He shook his head and winced in pain. He continued to hold back embarrassing tears. “How do you plan to get all the way to Canada?” she asked.

“I knows how to get to the next stop and they be tellin’ me where to go from there.”

“It sounds dangerous,” she whispered. “Where did you come from?”

“Can’t say, ma’am.”

“Very well. I understand. But we’re abolitionists. My mother met Sojourner Truth.”

“Still can’t say, ma’am.”

“If I knew, I would offer to help them. I’d offer to let other runaways stay here.”

“Please don’t press me, ma’am,” Joby said. “I’m not assured your man hasn’t gone to get the law.”

“He would never do that.” She frowned at the boy and sputtered, “You’ll see.”

#

Some months after they saw Joby on his way with a splint and sling fashioned by Mr. Engle, Osborne sat with Angelise at the kitchen table. Nelson had already gone to bed, when he said, "I met a Negro farmer, Ed Mathews from Pine Hill, when I went to the college library last week." Osborne was learning what he could about horse breeding. "He's working with a Mennonite community to help runaways hide and move on."

"Where's Pine Hill?"

"About five miles north out of Gettysburg. The Dobbins' send men and women and families on to him."

"I'd like to meet him. Could we invite him out here?"

"I don't know... He's very busy... and it would be a long way for him to come. The thing is..."

"Maybe I could meet him in Gettysburg like you did," Angelise said with an edge in her voice. Was he afraid to invite a black man to dinner? Anyway, she hated that Osborne could go places and do things that she was excluded from because of her sex or her age, although she would soon be nineteen.

"Angelise, listen to me."

"Sorry," she said, chastened.

"Mr. Mathews asked me if we could help him and Basil Biggs..." He stopped speaking and looked into her face, holding his breath. It could be dangerous to hide runaways. If they were found, they could be hauled off down South, back to their owners. And the ones who hid them could be charged according to the Fugitive Slave Act.

"What would we have to do?"

"Let runaways stay here, usually only one or two at a time. Probably for only a few days. Feed them, tell them where to go next. Give them provisions for the road."

"I'd do it," Angelise said. "But what if people find out and someone comes after them – or us?" She spoke calmly; she wasn't afraid for herself. "Would we be putting Nelson in danger?"

"There are some things people must do, Angelise," Osborne said.

That was the end of their discussion. But a week later, Angelise had a proposition for Osborne.

Using a long-handled hook to pull the iron arm of the kettle crane from the fire, Angelise used a wooden spoon to taste the stew. “Ouch,” she said, blowing on her tongue. She set out plates and spoons on the table. Then she added a loaf of bread and a ball of butter. They were eating late because Osborne had been gone all day. She had given Nelson his supper at five o’clock and he had fallen asleep in Osborne’s enormous leather chair by the fireplace. The fire was dying, but the lingering warmth was welcomed. Despite the warm spring days, the evenings were cool and damp.

“You know the old cabin on Plum Run about a mile southeast of here?” Angelise asked.

“That old fishing hut? Is it still standing?” Osborne was working his mashed potatoes into a cone shape in the middle of his plate. “My grandfather built that, but I think it was to get away from my grandmother and their wild children,” Osborne chuckled.

“I can’t imagine Uncle Jonathan was ever a wild child...”

“Oh, yes. Or so my mother told me. It was a story my father...”

“I was thinking I could fix it up for myself.”

“That old hut? It’s half fallen down.”

“It’s not completely derelict. I’ve been inside.” Angelise diverted her eyes and fingered a loose strand of hair by her ear.

“I’m sure it’s dangerous...”

“It’s not! The floorboards held me. I stepped around the broken glass. There’s an old lamp in there that still has oil in it.”

“It sounds like you’ve done more than test the floorboards.” Osborne had his strict father expression.

“It’s fun to have a little place to hide.”

“Angelise, you’re too old for playhouses. And you’ve never complained about sitting on a rock to fish.”

“I remember when we used to do that together,” she said with reproach in her voice. With a more plaintive tone, she went on. “I don’t want it for fishing. ... I mean, I could fish right from the porch in a comfortable chair, but I wanted to fix it up as a little house only for me.”

“Why? I don’t understand what you’re getting at.”

“I don’t know. Maybe nothing. A place to go to be by myself.”

“You can be alone anytime you want.”

“No, I can’t, not in a way. ... I want a place I can make my own. Fix it the way I want. Have only my things in it. Sleep there, if I want.” She paused. “In the summer.”

“I see,” Osborne said, not actually understanding.

“I thought we could fix it up. It needs new window glass, some repair to the pilings, new floorboards, paint...”

“Hold on, Miss Lindstrom. That sounds like building a new house. It probably needs a new roof, too...”

“It does.” Angelise started to giggle. Then she said, “Stop. Don’t make me laugh. We’ll wake Nelson.”

“You could do it,” he said after some thought. “It would take a while...”

“I don’t want anyone to know.”

As if she hadn’t spoken, Osborne said, “I’d have to get lumber cut to order. That would take some time ... and the glass. Paint. But I could get most of what I need in Bonaughtown or Gettysburg.”

“This is for me, Osborne, not you.”

“What do you mean?”

“You’re saying, ‘I will do this. I can get that...’”

“It’s only because I’m going to fix it up for you.” He was apologetic.

“Sorry.” Raising her eyebrows and opening her eyes wide, she said, “I was hoping we could have it finished by summer.”

“Two months? I don’t know. I’m still sowing seed.”

“I would move the bee crates to be closer to the cabin, too, and have my own garden. ... I’d grow strawberries and...”

“It sounds like you want to set up your own little household over there.”

“I want my own place. Mrs. Engle’s been running your house since long before I came here. Romy follows her around like a puppy...”

“This will give you a way to run away from your life.”

“That’s what I *do* want! Osborne, this is not my life. In your house. On your farm. In the middle of nowhere!”

“Do you think this is my life?” he growled. “Sometimes I...”

“This is your life! Everything here is yours!”

“You know it’s not what I wanted. It’s not what you wanted, but we...”

“Stop it!” Angelise put her hands on her hips and stomped her foot.

“Don’t lose your composure...”

“I will! You want me to be like everyone else. Like Mrs. Engle, for heaven’s sake! I know you do!”

“Please, Angelise, we’re talking about the cabin...”

“You have no idea what it’s like for me.” Her face was red and it looked like she was about to cry. Her hair was falling out of her cap.

“We’ve talked about his too many times. Be quiet and listen to me.”

“You see? You’re telling me what to do. ‘Be quiet.’ Mrs. Engle tells me. Mr. Engle does. ‘You didn’t get the clod out of Nancy’s left rear hoof.’ Just this morning! It was the size of a pea!”

Whispering and pointing to Nelson readjusting himself in the chair, Nelson said, “Let’s go over there tomorrow. See what’s needed.” He walked to the fireplace and picked up a small dish and fingered the small coins in it. “I hope it’s not too muddy out there.”

Angelise, speaking more seriously now, said, “I was thinking that we could use the cabin to hide runaways.”

“Oh, now I see...”

“No, Osborne, that’s not the reason...”

“I think it’s a grand scheme. It would be safer for everyone. Them and us.”

“And my bees might be an additional hindrance to anyone snooping around.” Angelise laughed; Osborne didn’t exactly smile, but he stopped frowning. Nelson made a noise and sat up straight in his chair. Angelise whispered, “You’d better take him to his bed.”

When Osborne was climbing the stairs with Nelson in his arms, she said, “Take off his dirty clothes before you put him in bed.” Osborne nodded, revealing a look of contentment with his small family.

Angelise knew Osborne’s proposal to help runaways was the right thing to do, particularly after getting the terrified Joby’s arm set and sending him on his way. But every plan put off her dream to return to Martinique. At least this one could be a great adventure.

Chapter 4

At the beginning, Ethan was the only runaway who stayed with the Hoffmanns for more than a day or two. The farm was too close to the border with Maryland, and slave catchers could easily reach it, if they imagined they had reason to. Not all of the Hoffmanns' neighbors opposed the practice of slavery and might tell a slave catcher where to look – for a price.

A free black farmer and his wife, Benjamin and Candace Watson, were grabbed off their own land a year before and were only rescued after several local men cut the slave catchers off before they reached the border. Mr. Smucker told Osborne about the hard riding they had done and the fear that remained in the Watson's' eyes for weeks afterwards.

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Ethan unpacked what few clothes he had brought with him. He put his brown trousers and red checked shirt in the middle drawer of the bureau. In the top drawer he placed his handkerchiefs, drawers, socks, and suspenders; his toiletry items were laid out on the washstand. He laid down on the old bed. The mattress may have been new, but unexpectedly, he rolled toward a depression in the middle. Maybe it was the bed, but as soon as he closed his eyes, his mind drifted back to his days as a slave on the McElhannon farm. His thoughts went from mindful to a drifting dream state and back again.

#

It was a hot July day when Ethan emerged from the cabin he shared with five other men and boys. The sun was blazing; the sky was a robin's egg-blue so bright he had to shade his eyes. He was twelve years old and it was his first day on the McElhannon farm in north central Maryland. He wasn't sure where it was near, if there were any streams or rivers nearby, any mountains in either direction. He noticed a forest to the east as they drove to the farm from Virginia. They arrived in the middle of the night and he and the other boys had been left to sleep in the morning. They would start working the next day.

Ethan's grandmother, Sukey, was brought to America from West Africa in 1781. She had a black earth complexion and round features, and the auctioneer described her as good-looking enough and an ordinary size. She had high-riding hips that could support a bundle or carry a grown child, but when she arrived in Savannah, she was thirty pounds lighter than when she left her home. Sukey never regained the weight she lost, and she never recovered from the grief she breathed in when she was sold from the auction block along with kegs of brandy, bales of cotton, and furniture.

She went with Master James Cartwell, the owner of a peanut farm a hundred miles from the sea. Riding away from the ocean, she felt sadder than she ever had; the

smell of the ocean had been in her nostrils all her life. She didn't mind the plantation except for the summer heat with no ocean breeze to give relief. Working the fields wasn't the worst way a person could spend her time. She wasn't chained and she wasn't branded and some of the folks she worked with spoke a dialect similar to hers.

In her second year on the farm – she was about twenty that year – a man named Titus was brought to the slave quarters. He was six feet tall and had a four-inch scar running from the corner of his mouth to his ear. He had been born a slave in a Georgia State Representative's attic on Lafayette Square in Savannah. Although Sukey had few English words, she showed an independent and aggressive nature that Titus felt well suited to. He was kind of beat down by then, but Sukey took a shine to him and soon she was pregnant. The master encouraged his slaves to form attachments and bear children. It kept the men from trying to run. And the more babies born, the more new slaves to use on the plantation or sell at market.

Sukey and Titus had many years together and Sukey bore him seven fine sons. She would be in the fields pulling weeds, drop a baby, and be back at work with the baby in a sling before the end of the day. If she was forced to, she would leave a babe in her cabin with bread or a little mush on a rag on his finger. Then she would sneak to nurse him in the morning and afternoon.

Sukey gained a reputation as a healer, using sassafras and snakeroot and other plants and herbs known to her. She could have become a house slave – she had the comportment and intelligence for it – but she didn't want to speak English and she didn't want to work close to white people. She preferred the outdoor life with people like herself. Even in the inclement seasons, Sukey would rather be outdoors sitting under the camphor tree than in a cabin or barn. People would leave her alone when she sat under that tree; it's seeds were poisonous and many people had a reaction to it.

Ethan's father Cole was Sukey and Titus' sixth son. He and his younger brother Marcus were sold to a slave trader in 1822. Sukey did not cry when two of her beloved boys were taken from her. By then, her heart had been crushed too many times, and she had been hit about the head too often. Marcus went to Tennessee, and Cole ended up in Virginia with the Blairs where he made a family with a six-foot half-breed who also slaved on the plantation. The brothers never saw each other again, and, as far as they knew, the rest of their brothers could be anywhere or still on the Cartwell farm for the rest of their days.

Ethan was born in 1828, the youngest of Cole and Philandia's four children. His mother and two sisters and the other slave women spoiled him, but his father was determined that he should grow up strong, righteous and clear-headed. Philandia was able to keep him out of the fields until he was eight by having him work with an old black woman in Mistress' house garden alongside two other little boys.

Ethan and the other children considered all the older slaves their aunts and uncles and all the elders looked after them. They would sneak them an extra piece of molasses

taffy, tell them stories, and teach them essential skills such as whittling, making a fire with flint and stone, plaiting hair, sewing and darning, and fishing on Sunday afternoon. All the slaves knew by instinct that they had to trust each other to survive and had to find love and comfort with each other; no one else could be trusted.

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The McElhannon house was in the Greek Revival style. The front door opened into a wide hall running the length of the first floor. At the end of the hall was a circular stair to the second floor. A chandelier hung from the ceiling. On one side of the front door were two chairs and a marble topped-table. On the other side, a mirrored hallstand. Ethan saw his reflection for the first time in that looking glass. The public rooms off the hall included two parlors, a dining room, and a music room. Ethan had a chance to look into them from the hallway, but he never entered.

The first parlor was where Mrs. McElhannon tried for civilizing influences on her husband and sons. The furniture was made of walnut and rosewood and covered with brocade fabrics purchased in Fredericksburg. There was a thickly upholstered settee, a wing chair for Mr. McElhannon, and two small cushioned chairs. An elaborately patterned Brussels carpet covered the floor; similar wallpaper covered the walls. In the center of the room was a round table displaying the family Bible, porcelain shepherdeses, and a carved box inlaid with mother of pearl.

The smaller second parlor was designed for Mrs. McElhannon to entertain lady guests who might come for card games and gossip. The room was decorated with dark polished wood furniture covered in deep red velvet. Lace panels and red silk draperies hung from brass rods above the windows and etched glass oil lamps lit the room. Mrs. McElhannon had no inclination to socialize with the wives of the men who owned the land near their farm. She chided her husband that the room looked like a house of ill repute. In a sharp voice, he answered, "How would ye know, Mrs. McElhannon?"

In contrast to the master's house, the slave quarters were like a small village made up of several one-room cabins, a smoke house, and a stable for five mules and two workhorses. The slaves, farm hands, and farm manager rose at 3:00 a.m. to feed, water, and harness the horses, milk the cows, and feed the pigs and poultry. Then they hauled wood for the stoves. Breakfast was at seven – beefsteak or pork, eggs, fried potatoes, fruit pie, hominy cakes, fritters, and coffee.

Planting and harvesting went on from April to October. The spring started with plowing, rolling, pulling up stumps, burning refuse, and preparing fields for sowing. Then they hauled manure to be spread over the plantings. Besides field work there were fence posts and rails to be fitted, gates to be maintained, stalls to be mucked, grain to be threshed, apples to be dried or mashed to cider.

In July, hay and wheat were harvested using a mowing machine and reaper or cutting it down with scythes. The cut grains were raked together and taken to the barn

where the wheat was shucked and sorted. Barley and rye were mowed by hand. September and October were the months to bring in the potatoes, corn, and beans. Oats were threshed and corn was husked. Then the fields were plowed up and the next season's wheat crop was planted.

Day after day, the whole year round. Working from the middle of the night until late afternoon. Asleep by sunset. Calloused hands and feet, so hard almost nothing was felt on the skin. Only their wooly hair to protect their heads from the sun. Only Sundays to rest or spend time in enjoyable recreations.

On Sundays the slaves played games with their children and fished in the nearby creek, mostly catching fish less than ten inches long, which would be fried to a crisp in suet and salted for a tasty treat. In the evening, everyone gathered on the hard ground behind the cabins. The men would start a beat by slapping their knees and inside of their thighs. Some would hit against upside down wooden boxes. They tilted the box a little or more to create different sounds. Everyone joined in with chant and response songs. At these times, life was good, love was shown, stories were shared, and the nights ended with two men doing the dozens until everyone had a good laugh.