



Chapter One

September 1850

A shadow grazed the moonlit yard and ducked into the regiment of pine trees blocking the western winds. Anna Brent pressed her nose against the cold pane and scanned the row of evergreens. Clusters of cones and needles bounced and swayed like the stuffed arms of a scarecrow in the breeze, and her mother's quilt fluttered on the clothesline beyond the porch. The shadow didn't reappear.

Boots tapped across the wood floor behind Anna, and she jumped. "What is it?" Charlotte whispered.

Anna stumbled back from the parlor window and turned toward her housekeeper. Charlotte's hair was bundled under a net snood at the nape of her neck, and tight ringlets dangled at the sides of her face to hide the rugged scars left by her former owner's knife.

Charlotte smoothed her fingers over her lilac skirt. "Did someone knock?"

"No, but I saw something outside." Anna glanced out the window again, but the night was still. "Are we supposed to receive another shipment tonight?"

"I don't know. I haven't heard from Ben since Tuesday."

Their agent usually sent Charlotte a note before guiding runaways to their house, although some nights Ben himself was notified only hours before he had to deliver a shipment. On those nights, they would be surprised by a knock on the back door.

Anna nodded toward the hallway outside the parlor door. They had to be careful, for the sake of the others staying in their home. "You had best hide our friends."



Fear stole through the resolve in Charlotte's soft brown eyes, and Anna wished she could tell her that she didn't have to be afraid. "It's probably a bear rummaging for food."

"Of course," Charlotte replied. Then she lifted her skirt and rushed toward the steps.

Anna stared out the window and waited. Moonlight illuminated the clusters of deep purple-and-white calla lilies scattered around the front yard. Her father's wagon stood beside the porch—but her father was in Cincinnati for three days, ordering supplies for the mill.

She had been born in this house twenty-two years ago and had seen a bear only once, when she was riding a couple of miles north. The bear had bolted away from her and her horse, disappearing into the thorny bramble.

This time of year, though, bears weren't the only animals that pilfered food. Panthers hid in the craggy hills and wilderness, too, along with packs of wolves. She often heard the wolves, but she rarely saw one.

Whatever she had seen outside tonight hadn't darted into the trees like a panther or a wolf. It snuck through the yard, too big for a raccoon or skunk, yet too small to be a deer. And if it was a person, it was either a skittish guest or someone intent on trapping the men and women hidden upstairs.

Anna fidgeted with the bow on her bodice, her eyes fixed on the dark trees.

Slave hunters traveled north more often these days. Even though the scriptures commanded care of the poor and orphaned, many of her neighbors collaborated with the enemy and willingly betrayed runaways in their flight north. Instead of rescuing slaves, they swelled their pockets with blood rewards and reveled in the pleasure of their own freedom.

These days it was hard to know whom she could trust.

Something moved in the row of pine trees, and Anna strained her eyes to see if it was a person or an animal. The apparition darted toward the trees and then back again, hidden in a nest of needled branches.

Anna lifted the footstool from the entryway and carried it to the

hearth. The fire crackled beside her, and heat permeated through her layered skirts as she stepped up onto the stool. She gathered her skirts with her left hand and reached above the mantel with the other to pull down her father's Kentucky rifle.

In the kitchen downstairs, she tugged open the drawer that her father kept stocked with cartridges. Edwin Brent prized this flintlock more than the two hunting rifles he kept stored in their barn, saying it was more accurate than any modern gun. He'd never harm a person with it, but he was a deadeye for deer and fowl.

She slid three cartridges and balls into her pocket and then ripped off the end of a fourth foil cartridge, shook the black powder into the long barrel, and rammed the cartridge and ball into the gun with the rod. It took some people three or four minutes to load a rifle like this one, but her father had taught her how to load his gun in under a minute. And then he'd taught her how to shoot it.

When she stepped out the front door, strands of hair stole away from her braid and blew across her eyes and neck, but she kept both hands clenched on the gun. Hundreds of cicadas sang out in the darkness. Down the hill, the wheel beside the woolen mill dumped buckets of water back into the river, which hummed and splashed in rhythm along Silver Creek.

A wolf cried out in the forest behind the house, and goose bumps prickled her arms when an entire pack answered the call with chilling howls. Either they were stalking dinner or the wolves sensed trouble.

Anna moved to the edge of the wide porch, the gun propped on her shoulder, and pointed the weapon toward the rolling hills and woods. A single hit on the lead wolf should scatter the rest of the pack, but if it didn't deter them, it should also give her enough time to load her next cartridge and ball.

Her gun honed on the forest, Anna watched the oak and sugar maple branches bat at the dark sky. The wolves didn't wander onto her property, but their cries escalated into a frenzy until, in an abrupt finale, they stopped.



The pine trees rustled to her right, and Anna swung toward the noise. She'd shoot to kill if it were a bear, but if it were a bounty hunter, she'd have to set the gun to her side.

Even though her father had taught her to shoot, he'd also taught her that the battle against slavery wasn't a fight against her fellow man. It was a silent, steady fight against evil. Instead of blasting her enemies with force, she and a few other members of the Religious Society of Friends relied on a quieter strategy of persuasion—and deception—to protect those runaways who couldn't protect themselves.

She wasn't afraid to die, but she'd never had a slave owner threaten her guests before. If one did, God help her, she didn't know what she would do.

Seconds passed in silence as a cloud blanketed the full moon. Her finger wrapped around the trigger, she called out, "Who goes there?"

When no one answered, she lifted her gun and blasted a warning shot in the air.

From the row of trees, a baby cried out in the darkness, and Anna pointed her gun toward the cry. Then she lowered the gun.

"Who goes there?" she shouted again into the darkness.

This time a faint voice answered. "A friend of a friend."

The gun clutched in her fingers, Anna cautiously moved off the porch. The voice could belong to a catcher baiting her away from the house, or it could be a fugitive who needed her help. She walked through the tall grass, past trees and the hidden door of the root cellar west of the house.

"Show yourself," she demanded, as the clouds swept past the moon.

A fifteen- or sixteen-year-old mulatto girl stepped out from the covering of trees, her head bowed. In her arms was a baby loosely swathed in a linsey-woolsey blanket. The child squirmed in the girl's arms and cried out again.

Anna set the gun on the ground. "Why didn't you knock on the back door?"

The girl looked up, and in the moonlight Anna saw a fresh wound on her forehead. Dirt smeared her caramel-colored cheeks, and her

curly hair was matted to her head. Her voice trembled when she spoke. "I ain't knowin' if it the right place."

"What is your name?"

"Marie." The girl held up the baby, and Anna saw his fair skin. "And this is my chile, Peter."

"He's hungry?"

"Yessum."

The baby's cries calmed into a whimper.

"When did you and Peter eat last?"

Marie closed her eyes and then reopened them. "Yesterday mornin'."

"Your milk?"

Marie shook her head. "Ain't workin' no more."

Anna glanced around the yard and down the hill to see if anyone was watching them. It was one thing to house a runaway slave, but should she house a runaway who might have stolen a white child? She couldn't risk her anonymity or sacrifice the lives of her other guests if this girl was lying to her.

Another cloud passed over the moon, turning the yard black for a moment. When the light returned, Anna set her hand on the girl's shoulder, and Marie flinched.

"Are you alone?" she asked.

Marie nodded in response.

"How did you find our house?"

"Unca Ben done brought us up the river and showed me the way." Her fingers caressed the baby's head and then pointed toward the house. "He say look for a quilt, but I ain't seen no quilt."

Before Anna could tell her about the quilt by the door, the pounding of horse hooves broke through the quiet. Marie clutched the baby to her chest. "He comin' for me."

"Uncle Ben won't hurt you."

"Not Unca Ben." Marie pulled away from her. "Massa Owens."



Chapter Two

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Anna shouted for her to stop, but Marie had already bolted for the back of the house with Peter in her arms. The horses would be at their house in two minutes, maybe less. Anna pulled her skirts above her knees and followed the girl into the darkness.

The rush of adrenaline might give Marie the strength to sprint a couple hundred yards, but she wouldn't have the strength to go much further. She and the baby needed to hide, not run.

She chased Marie toward the barn and watched the girl fidget with the clasp on the door and fling it open. Anna caught the door before it slammed shut. Hay crunched under Marie's feet as she fled across the floor. Goats bleated from their stalls.

Anna snatched a match from the top of the barrel and flicked it to light an oil lantern. Shadows danced over the mounds of hay at the far end of the barn. Even if Marie and the baby buried themselves in the straw, it wouldn't take long for a slave hunter with a pitchfork to find his prey. She had to catch Marie before a hunter did.

Marie dove into the hayrick, and Anna reached down for her arm. "They'll find you in here."

The girl trembled in Anna's grasp. "Massa's gonna kill me."

"We've got to get you into the house," Anna insisted. "It's warm upstairs, and safe."

Marie didn't move, but the baby cried out again.

"Please let me help you," Anna begged. "We've got fresh milk for Peter and plenty of food for you."

Anna stepped toward the barn door, no time left to linger. She



needed to greet her visitors like a lady and offer them a place to rest.

Her stomach rolled as she started to close the door. If her guests were hunters and they found Marie and the child in the barn, she would have to feign ignorance to protect the lives of the other runaways hiding inside the house...and the lives of the dozens of other fugitives who would pass through their station this fall.

"If they catch you..." she started to say—but she stopped herself. Marie knew better than she did what they would do if they caught her. She had probably traveled hundreds of miles in search of freedom. Anna wouldn't try to force her into the house.

She turned and jogged away from the barn. The horses were no longer trotting up the path. Either they had passed her house or the riders were tying their animals on the post in the yard.

Had she said the wrong thing to Marie? Maybe she should have been gentler instead of rushing her to make a decision when the girl was already scared.

She couldn't imagine how many white people had betrayed Marie in the past. She probably thought that Anna was going to lead her right to the hunters who would drag her back to her former master.

Anna flung open the back door and scraped the mud off her heels before she crossed the hallway and hurried down the stairs into the basement kitchen. Charlotte stood at the table, carving a roasted ham. She looked up at Anna and pointed toward the front of the house with the knife. "Someone's here."

"Are the guests safe?"

Charlotte shook her head; then her eyes grew wide with shock as she stared over Anna's shoulder.

Anna turned, and at the landing of the stairs stood Marie and Peter, tears streaking through the dirt on their faces. Instead of explaining why she changed her mind, Marie shut the door behind her and rushed

down the steps. She flung her knapsack onto the table and dug out a dirty glass bottle.

Anna quickly rinsed the bottle in a bucket of water while Charlotte went to the cold spring in the next room, where they kept their milk and cheeses. The housekeeper returned seconds later with a jar of goat's milk, water dripping off its sides.

"I didn't lock the front door," Anna whispered.

Charlotte filled the bottle and handed it to Marie, who pressed it into Peter's mouth. The instant he began sucking, heavy footsteps pounded above, across the hallway floor.

Charlotte grabbed Marie's arm and hissed, "Hurry, child."

She pushed Marie toward a second staircase off the back of the kitchen and pulled the door shut behind them.

Her father's rifle was still out in the grass, abandoned beside the pines. Even though she would never kill a slave hunter, she had nothing with which to defend the people upstairs. Glancing across the counter, she plucked up the knife that Charlotte had been using to cut the ham. It wasn't much, but maybe a crazy woman flailing a knife would scare them away.

Her fingers balled around the steel handle, but instead of feeling terrified, an unexplainable peace rushed over her heart. The Divine Presence was in her home, with her. The Spirit blanketed her soul with peace and soothed her fear.

Her fingers loosened their grip on the knife. Whatever happened, she would remain calm.

"Anna?" Her father called out from the top of the steps, and she collapsed back against the counter. He had returned early from his trip.

Finding Marie in her yard had unsettled her. She had nothing to fear. She had almost put down the knife when she caught a glimpse of black hair behind her father.

"Evenin', Anna," Matthew Nelson said with a wink. His grin turned

quickly to concern when he saw her windblown hair and the knife in her fingers. "Are you okay?"

She glanced between Matthew and her father. "There was a wolf outside." Matthew stepped toward her. "And you grabbed a knife?"

She shrugged; it was too late to change her story. "I wanted to check on the livestock."

The elder Nelson appeared on the landing and walked down the ten steps behind his son and into the kitchen. "What's this about a wolf?"

Henry Nelson was several inches shorter than Matthew, and twenty or so pounds heavier, but even in his fifties he was a handsome man with thick dark hair, trimmed sideburns, and sharp eyes. Matthew had his father's hazel eyes and black hair, though his smile was much warmer than Henry's—especially when he smiled at her.

Matthew took her right hand. "A wolf was threatening Anna, so she threatened it back."

She bowed her head, tugging her hand out of his grasp. "I was just trying to protect our animals."

"Did you see it?" Henry queried.

"I watched it run away."

He stared at the knife in her hand. "Well, it was a good thing it wasn't running toward you."

The knife clattered when she dropped it beside the ham. "What brings you out to Silver Creek tonight?"

"I needed to talk your father into upping his production of blankets for me. I've got people from here to Indianapolis ordering supplies so they can leave for California before the first snow."

Matthew nodded toward the stove. "Something smells good."

"Charlotte just fried potatoes."

He glanced toward the cold spring at the right of the kitchen. "Where is Charlotte?"



"She's working upstairs." Anna smiled at her father. "You aren't supposed to be home yet."

"I finished early." Her father kissed the top of her head. "And I missed my girl."

She spoke to the elder Nelson. "We have plenty of extra food if you'd like to stay for dinner."

"We'd be delighted."

She reached up to the shelf overhead for the china plates, but her father stopped her. "Were you taking laundry off the clothesline earlier?"

"No..." she began and then paused. She had to get the quilt off the line before another runaway arrived. "Yes, I suppose I was. I stopped when I saw the wolf."

"There was only a quilt left," Matthew said. "You can take it down later."

"Oh, I couldn't leave it up. It was my mother's."

"I'll go with you," Matthew said as he followed her up to the main floor. "In case the wolf returns."

She protested, but Matthew wouldn't listen to her. She retrieved her wool shawl from a peg in the front closet and wrapped it around her shoulders.

As they strolled into the cool night air, Matthew began telling her a story about fishing on the Whitewater, but she couldn't concentrate. Two floors above the porch was the attic, and hidden inside the attic was a tired and hungry baby. She could only hope that Peter would fall asleep after his stomach was filled with milk. He had to stay quiet if they were going to keep their presence a secret from the Nelsons.

And they had to keep it a secret.

Henry Nelson exported products like wool blankets from Union County to small and large towns around the country. He and her father had done business together for three decades, but about ten years ago Henry had become an outspoken advocate for slave owners' rights. He was vocal in his beliefs that those who harbored slaves were breaking

the eighth commandment...and hurting their country's economy.

She and her father and many of the Friends believed differently. Instead of condemning the work on the Underground, they thought God wanted them to care for the slaves like the Samaritan who had rescued the wounded Jew in the Gospel of Luke.

Matthew had never taken sides on the slavery issue—at least, he'd never taken sides when he was around her. She suspected that he, too, believed that helping runaway slaves was akin to theft.

Matthew trotted down the steps and stopped at the edge of the grass. "Where did you see the wolf?"

She pointed to the forest on the east side of their house. "He disappeared into the trees."

"Did he hear you?"

"I screamed and threw a couple pieces of firewood at him."

He stopped and turned toward her, admiring her with his gaze. "You're fearless."

When he smiled at her, she tried to smile back. Four months ago, after she returned from Oberlin College, Matthew had asked her to marry him. She had refused him then, and if he asked again, her answer would be the same. Matthew didn't know about her work on the Underground...and if they married, it would be impossible for her to continue harboring runaways if her husband opposed abolition.

Matthew stepped toward her, and she skirted around him. "I have to get back inside to help with dinner."

He reached out and caught her arm. "They won't even miss us."

She drew back from him and reached up to the clothesline instead. With a quick pinch, she snapped off each pin and tucked them into her pocket; then she folded the quilt once in her arms.

He turned her shoulders, but instead of stepping toward him, she stepped back again.



"Anna...", he started, but she pressed her finger on his lips.

"Don't ask me again."

"Rachel and Luke are to be married in two weeks."

"I know."

He leaned close to her cheek and whispered, "What are we waiting for?"

He waited for her reply, but when she didn't speak, he dropped his hand. "Because you'll be disavowed?"

She folded the edges of the quilt again. "That's one of the reasons."

"If you say you'll marry me, Anna, I'll convert tomorrow." He slipped his hand under her chin, and she faced him in the dim light. "I've been saving my money, and I want to leave this place with you as my wife. I want us to go to California together, make our fortune in gold. Then we can come back here and live."

She shivered. "It's too cold to leave for California."

His hand dropped to his side. "We'll go the southern route, like everyone else."

She shook her head. "I don't want to go to California."

"We don't have to leave until spring...or we don't have to go at all."

She patted the calico on the quilt, her eyes focused on the trees beyond him. "We can never marry, Matthew."

He flung his hands up in frustration. "Why don't you want to get married?"

Her mind whirled, searching for words that made sense. Words that were kind but firm. She wanted him to know that she cared about him, but there were so many reasons she couldn't marry, especially him.

The words didn't come.

"You don't understand," she said softly.

"You're right, Anna." He turned toward the house. "I don't understand." She wanted to reach out and take his elbow, but instead she tucked



her fingers into the folds of calico. She felt guilty, letting him assume that she wouldn't marry him because of her faith or because he wanted to leave for California, but she couldn't possibly tell him everything.

It was more than the fact that she was a Quaker. She admired him, but she didn't love him like her friend Rachel loved Luke. Anna had known Matthew for years, but he couldn't be trusted with the secrets of her heart.

In the darkness above them, a muffled cry broke the silence, and Matthew stopped walking. Her breath caught in her throat. She glanced up at the windows and then at Matthew in front of her.

Her mind raced as she tried to concoct an answer to his expected question about why she had a baby in the house. She could say it was the child of a relative. A neighbor. He would ask more questions, of course, and she would have to answer them and then somehow inform her father and Charlotte of her story.

Perspiration beaded on her forehead when Peter cried again. If Charlotte were back downstairs, Matthew would want to know who was caring for the baby. And he would wonder why she hadn't mentioned earlier that she had a guest.

Matthew turned slowly back toward her, and she tried to smile at him.

"I told you there was a wolf," she said with a shrug.

He scanned the yard and then looked back at her. "It sounds like a pup."

She rushed around him and climbed the steps to the porch. "Which means the whole pack is nearby."

"I don't know..."

She shushed him. "Hurry, Matthew."

He followed her up the porch stairs and into the house. She bolted the door behind them.



Chapter Three

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Anna shuffled around the kitchen, filling a basket with soda biscuits and a pitcher with fresh apple cider for the men upstairs in the dining room. The fire popped and blazed in front of her, but no sounds came from the attic. Either Peter had fallen asleep or his cries were insulated in his hiding place.

She had never been so grateful for the quiet.

Charlotte slipped down the back staircase moments later and reached for the knife to finish cutting the ham.

“I gave some paregoric to the wee one to help him sleep.”

“Did it work?” Anna asked.

“For now.”

Those who weren’t sleeping were probably terrified.

Anna scooped the fried potatoes onto a platter alongside green beans. She didn’t want to go upstairs to the dining room and serve Matthew, but she didn’t have a choice. Both of their fathers would wonder why she was hiding. Matthew had stopped speaking to her when they walked through the door, and she doubted he would even attempt casual conversation over dinner.

She couldn’t blame him for fuming, though she wished she could be completely honest with him. The truth would not only put her at risk, but it could threaten their entire network.

Walking into the spring room, Anna knelt by the cistern of icy water and pulled out a bottle of cream. Moving to the kitchen, she filled a bowl on the table with cream and added the blackberries that she and Charlotte had picked that afternoon for themselves and their hidden guests.

Even if she set aside her work on the Underground and married Matthew, they would never be compatible. He may convert, but he would always feel the pull of the world more than she did. And if he weren't careful, the elders would one day disavow both him and his wife.

When she was at Oberlin, Anna had read the journals of renowned Friends like Elizabeth Fry, who had helped revolutionize the prison system for women around the world. Elizabeth Fry, however, struggled at home with a complacent husband and almost a dozen children who chose to leave the Society of Friends. Anna would be devastated if she married a man who wasn't dedicated to his faith or if they raised children who turned their backs on the Friends.

Before she'd turned twenty, she had resolved herself to the fact that she would probably never marry. There was much more she could do as an independent Quaker woman than she could married to a man who was either pro-slavery or ambivalent to the sufferings of their friends down South.

But if she ever did marry, she hoped for a husband who was committed both to God and to the strict morals of the Friends. A man committed to helping her rescue those who had escaped slavery.

Charlotte placed the roasted ham, potatoes, and pitcher of cider into the dumbwaiter and yanked on the rope to propel it to the second floor. Anna slipped by her and went upstairs, biscuits in one hand and the bowl of blackberries in the other.

Matthew didn't look at her as she set the basket on the table. She turned toward the dumbwaiter to remove the rest of the food, but when she did, she saw the latest edition of the *Liberty Era* on the sideboard. She was supposed to burn that yesterday. How could she have forgotten?

While the men were eating tonight, she would feed it to the fire.

She reached for the paper, but before she touched it, Matthew swept it away. Turning to the dumbwaiter, she tried to ignore him



and what he was reading. She'd already read the feature story so many times that she practically knew it by heart.

When she set the platter of potatoes on the table, she glanced up. Matthew was looking right back at her. "What is this?"

So much for not talking to her.

Edwin and Henry stopped their conversation as well, and Henry glanced over the shoulder of his son to read the front page. Minutes passed as she served the ham and the drinks. And she watched, almost in fascination, as Henry's eyes grew large like the harvest moon.

When he finally looked back up, his voice sounded like a growl. "Who is Daniel Stanton?"

Her father cut off a lump of butter with his knife before he spoke. "The new editor at the *Era*."

"He's turning the paper into propaganda!"

Her father smoothed the butter over a hot biscuit. "There's no crime against passion."

Henry pushed the paper away. "Rubbish! There's already enough animosity around here without an outsider coming in and infuriating everyone again."

Anna sat down across from Matthew and passed him the ham. Her father picked up the platter of potatoes and beans, but he didn't dish any onto his plate. "Isaac thinks he will help increase subscriptions."

"Isaac is a fool."

"Isaac is a good businessman," Edwin said as he handed over the platter. "And a friend."

"Well, the man he hired is trying to stir up sentiments."

Her father pulled the paper toward him. "It looks like the story of a fugitive slave."

Henry slapped the edge of the paper with his hand. "This Daniel Stanton claims that the slave's master was breaking moral law for retrieving



his property instead of reminding readers that the slave was breaking our Union's law by running away."

"Did he discuss God's law?"

Henry didn't seem to hear him. "People like him don't realize that the end of slavery would mean the end of our Union."

"That's rubbish," Anna muttered, and then jerked her head up.

No one was looking at her, and she sighed. She had to mind herself and her temper before people like the Nelsons guessed where her and her father's sentiments lay. It was her actions, not her words, that defended the runaways. The lives of the six people upstairs were at the mercy of her tongue.

Henry continued ranting about the inane stunts of abolitionists, like it was the fault of abolitionists that the country was divided over this issue. How could he not be moved even a little by Daniel Stanton's story?

The new editor was a poor writer, yet he had captured the pain and despondency of an older slave named Bradley—a man apprehended near Bloomington by a notorious Negro slave hunter named Simon Mathers, whose profession was to betray other colored people in exchange for reward money. Bradley's owner had come all the way from St. Louis to retrieve his slave from Simon Mathers, and when he found him, he fitted an iron collar around Bradley's neck and made him walk the two hundred miles home. The owner had stated in public that he'd cushioned Bradley in the past, but now his Negro was going to find out what slavery was really like.

Runaway slaves like Bradley fought for a single breath of freedom like a drowning person fought for air, yet the catchers snatched away their last hope that liberty and justice was truly for all. And somehow the federal government justified this cruelty, ruling that slaves were property instead of people with rights. Their masters could do whatever they pleased with their property—sell them, beat them, kill them—as if these

beloved children of God were hogs or cattle instead of souls enveloped in rugged flesh and blood.

The story had sickened Anna, as did every story about slaves who were abused by their owners. But Daniel Stanton had taken a stand and both condemned the owner for his cruelty and applauded Bradley for running north. Anyone courageous enough to write in opposition of slavery—and put their name on their articles—was a brave soul.

Henry didn't turn to the second page of the newspaper, but if he had, he would have read about Delia Wharton, a young woman in North Carolina who had been sentenced to death for helping five slaves escape. Henry probably would have applauded the courts for upholding the law.

She had never known anyone put to death by the courts or even jailed in Indiana for assisting a fugitive, although plenty of people had been tarred and feathered and run out of town for their work on the Underground Railroad. A few had even been killed by the opposition, but there had never been enough evidence to indict the killers for murder.

"Where did this Daniel Stanton come from?" Matthew asked.

"Isaac said he was a lawyer." Her father took a long sip of water. "From someplace in Ohio, I believe."

Henry set down his fork. "You'd better tell Isaac to be careful about what his new man writes."

A smile slipped across Edwin's face. "Why don't you tell Isaac yourself?"

Anna stifled her own smile. Henry may lambaste abolition around town, but he usually withheld his opinion from Isaac Barnes; the publisher of the *Liberty Era* was also the town banker and held the deed for the Nelsons' elegant home.

"You may think this is funny, Edwin, but there are serious repercussions for editors intent on riling up anger."

The smile on her father's face disappeared. "The press has freedom in our country."