

What Really Happened...

A Collection of 6 Historical Biographies

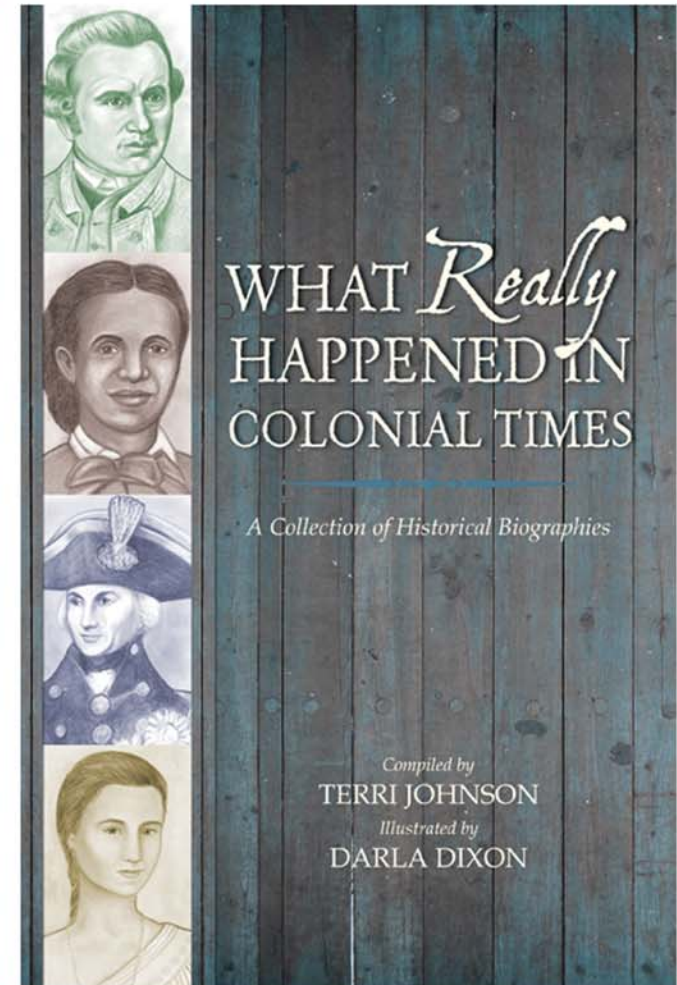
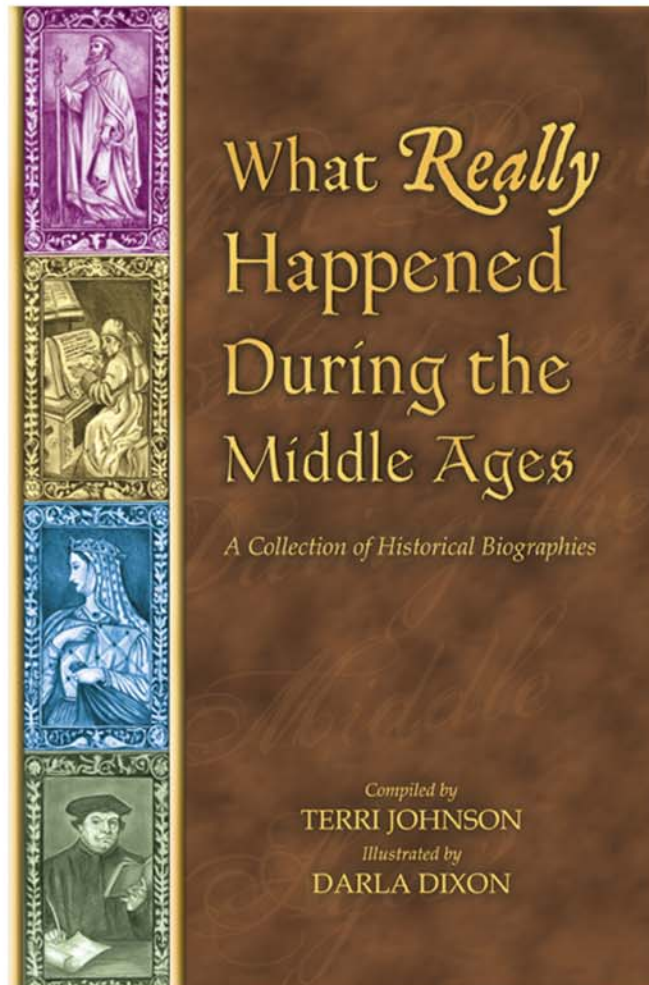
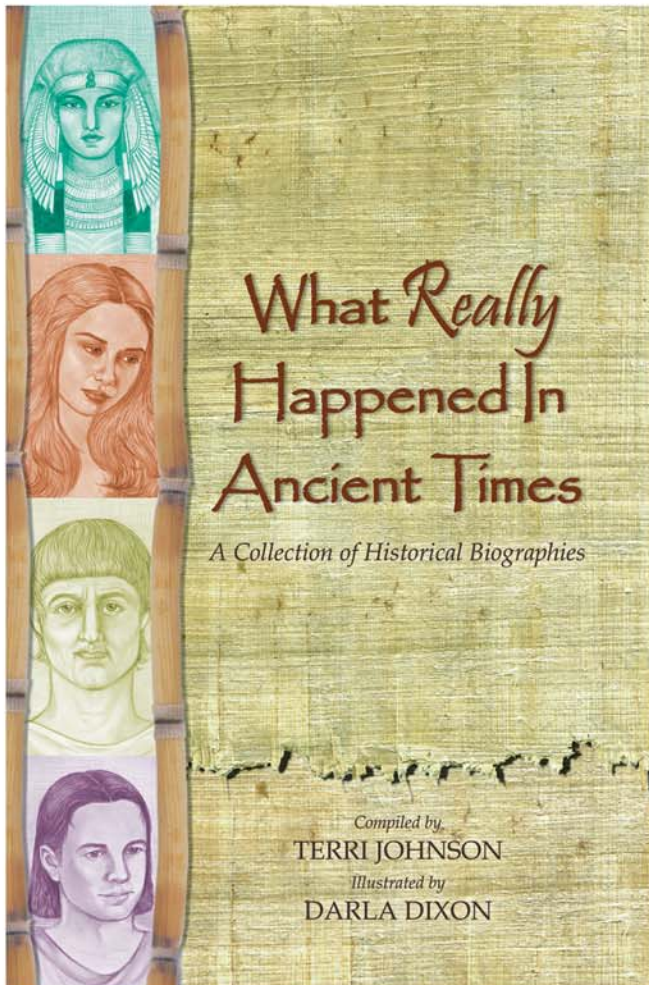
Included are:

Eve
Gilgamesh
King Wenceslas
Johann Gutenberg
Pocahontas
Catherine Ferguson

The books below contain an additional 18 historical biographies that will inspire and delight your family. Stories are intended for families to read aloud or children 8-14 to read alone. Biographies highlight individuals who made an impact on our world from creation through the 19th century.

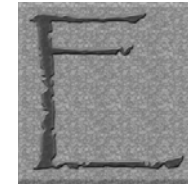
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*For Rachel and Lydia, my sweet daughters who love a good story.
May you be inspired to do great things - Terri*

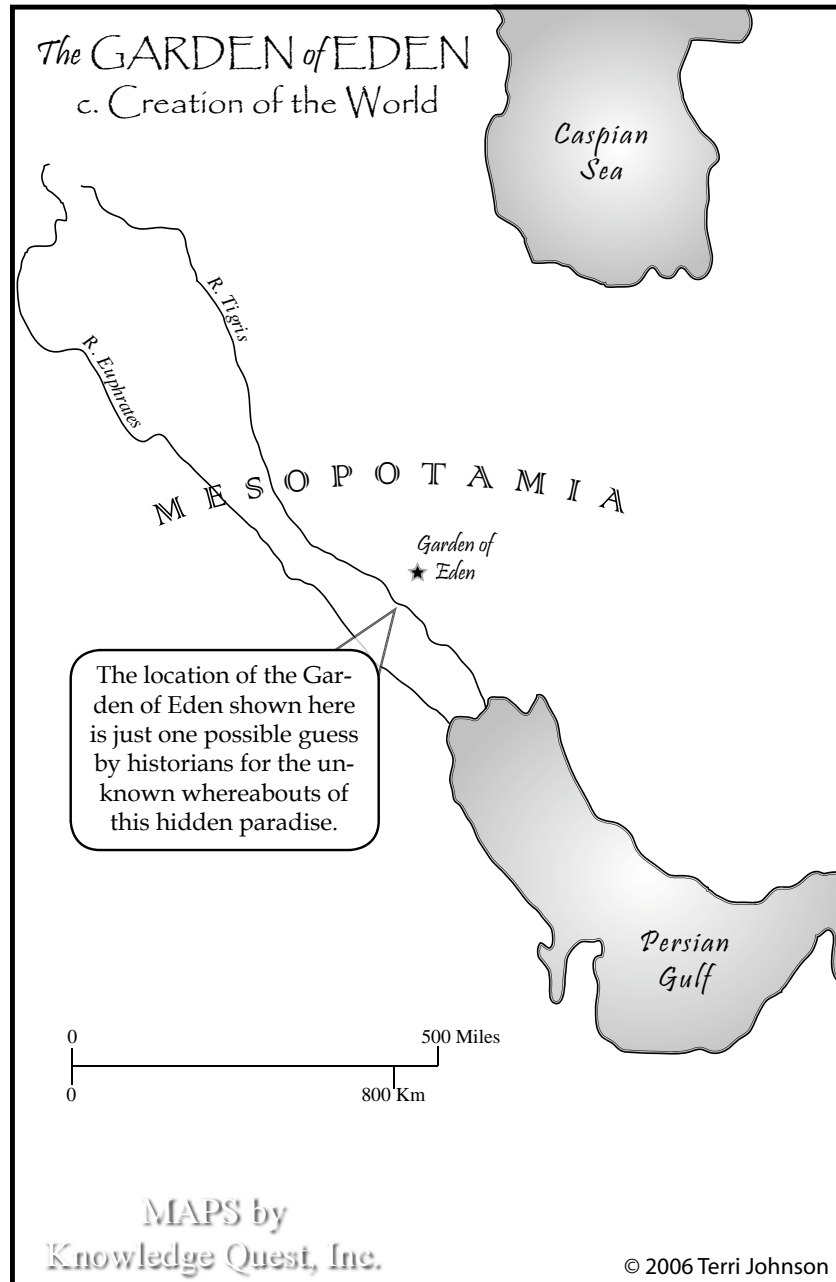
*My part of this story is dedicated to my mother, for giving me the
opportunity to help her. Thanks Mom - Nicole*



*E*ve
The Very First Days of the World

*by Terri Johnson
and Nicole Johnson*

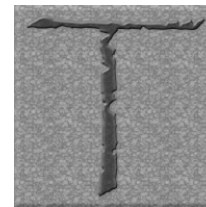




1 Eve

The Very First Days of the World

by Terri and Nicole Johnson



The long, thick, massive body of the slithering snake began to circle about her, taunting her, enticing her, deceiving her. Its dry scaly coils brushed against her leg, sending shivers up her spine. Once it completed its agonizingly slow circle around her, the huge head of the creature rose up ominously to confront her face to face. The hypnotic ruby eyes of the snake matched the color of the gorgeous apple it held between its jaws. "Eat," the serpent hissed, "Eat and you will become as great as He - powerful, beautiful and everywhere at once!"

Struggling between desire and disgust, she tried to turn away from those eyes, but found that she was riveted in place. Panic rose within her breast and she opened her mouth to

scream, but no sound came. She pushed down the urge to flee, mustered her courage and looked the great serpent in the eye with a confidence she did not feel. "Let me go," she pleaded in a faint whisper. "Never," it hissed. The apple it held in its mouth began to ooze and drip from its fangs, like blood spilling to the ground.

The trance broken, the woman turned and ran at an inhuman speed she did not know she possessed. Her feet barely touched the earth as she fled from the temptation that haunted her. Several breathless moments later, she turned to look over her shoulder to find that the serpent was immediately behind her. She tried to run faster, but realized with a sense of dread that she would not be able to outrun this beast.

"No!" She screamed. "No! Not again! Please, not again!"

She awoke from her nightmare in a dripping sweat. With her heart still pounding and her hands visibly shaking, she turned over to the one who would comfort her. She found that she was alone. The pale light of daybreak was filtering into their bed chamber through the reed doorway and she realized that Adam had already risen for the day's work.

In the half light, she scanned the room to see that the children were still asleep. Seth stirred and rolled over, but remained in slumber. The images from her nightmare rushed back to her mind as she considered her children and her hopes and dreams for them. She breathed a prayer to her Maker. *Why, Creator, must I continue to be plagued by these dreams? Is there still a lesson that I have not learned from the garden? God,*

please, please, erase these disturbing thoughts from my mind and give me peace. Or perhaps you may see fit to tell me the reason for their continual return. Have I not been punished enough? Is your forgiveness not yet complete?

She lay back on her mattress, pleading silently to the One who brings peace out of chaos. Suddenly a forceful wind blew through the woven reed doorway, rustling the tousled hair upon the young sleeping heads. "Teach your children..." she thought she heard in the voice of the wind. The strange moving air swirled about the room and then past her own head, brushing against her cheek. She heard it again, but this time in the form of a very low whisper meant only for her, "Teach your children..." Her breath came in short gasps as she realized that she had just heard the voice of the One from whom she had not heard audibly in over 100 years. "Teach your children," she repeated to herself. Seth stirred again and stretching, sat up in his bed.

"Mother, did you say something?" he asked groggily.

"No, son, I did not. Or at least I did not mean to," she answered, wiping the sweat from her brow and her disheveled hair from her face. Realizing there would be no more rest for her until the sun began its descent at the far end of the day, she rose quietly and tip-toed out of the animal-skin covered dwelling. Drawing water from the watering hole was the first among many tasks that must be accomplished each morning. Upon her return from the watering hole, she poured some crushed grain along with a portion of the cool water into her stone pot for the morning porridge. She stoked the smoldering

coals from last night's fire and then placed the pot directly on them until the mixture was thick and bubbly. She tossed in some fresh herbs for flavor and some dried chunks of fruit for sweetness. Adam loved the way she prepared his porridge at the dawning of each new day.

Two arms grabbed her from behind and she jumped with a start.

"It is only me, dear wife," Adam cooed softly in her ear. "What has made you so jumpy this morning?" Turning into his full embrace, she placed her head upon his broad chest.

"I had the dream again, Adam," she blurted. "I am continually haunted by it." She paused to hear his reply. When none came, she went on. "He spoke to me, Husband."

"Who spoke to you?" Adam inquired cautiously. "The serpent?"

"No, my husband. It was the One," she paused. "It was Creator God from the garden!" She looked imploringly into his eyes.

"Goodness, Wife. Speak! What did our Friend say to you? Did He walk with you as in the days of old in the cool of the garden? Did His presence fill the entire space that you beheld? Did you grow small and weak next to His grandeur and might?"

"Husband, please... one question at a time. No, He did not reveal himself as in the days of the beginning of the world. He spoke to me in a quiet whisper in the form of a strong rushing wind. But I recognized His voice. How could I not? I asked Him why my dream continued to plague me so and He answered by saying, 'Teach your children!' And that is all. He

spoke no more."

Adam dropped his arms from around her and walked away several paces. He turned and walked back. "I, too, heard His voice, but it was in the form of a dream. I didn't recall it until now," his voice trailed off.

"What did He tell you, Adam?" He opened his mouth to speak when Seth and his younger sisters emerged from the doorway of their home.

"It was just one word," he quietly answered her. "He said, 'Remember'."

Without a word, the children went about their morning routine. Seth removed the heavy pot from the fire pit and began to stoke the dying embers, adding more brushwood and timber to fuel the flames. The girls filled gourd bowls with the delicious porridge and brought the steaming food to their parents where they still stood, staring at one another as though in a trance.

"Father, Mother, the meal is cooked and ready for you. Will you not come around the warmth of the fire and break your fast?"

"What? Oh. Forgive us children, we were... that is, our thoughts were elsewhere," Eve said as she sat down on the skins which were arranged neatly beside the fire pit for the morning meal.

Sensing some unspoken tension, the children were quiet as they ate their porridge.

Eve stared into the dancing fire. Her mind kept drifting back to her dream and the Voice that she had heard in the wind. What could He have possibly meant by "teach your children"?

I thought I was teaching them! Eve mused silently to herself. *Every day I teach them skills as we go about our endless tasks. And what was Adam supposed to remember? Have we forgotten something?*

“Mother?” Seth’s words broke into her reverie.

“Yes, my son?”

“I am off to tend the sheep, if you no longer need me here.”

“No, I do not need you. Go along with your father,”

Eve said, rising to her feet. She embraced her tall and lean 11-year-old son, planting a kiss on his forehead. Adam gave her a long and reassuring look that promised they would talk more at a later time. She turned and picked up the cooking pot and beckoned to each of her daughters. The girls shook out the skins from around the fire and carefully folded each one. They collected the gourd bowls and utensils and followed their mother down to the watering hole.

Once the dishes were washed, dried and put away, the girls tidied their indoor and outdoor living quarters while Eve swept the packed dirt floors. Next, the goats were milked and then Mother and daughters fetched their woven reed baskets to gather produce from the orchard and garden on the far side of the brook. They picked juicy sun-ripened figs and glossy pink pomegranates. Clusters of powdery grapes were beginning to purple on neatly trimmed vines. In the garden, the girls dug up an assortment of root vegetables, careful to save their delicate green tops which would make a wonderful addition to their evening meal.

Throughout the course of the day, Eve contemplated God’s words to her. *Teach your children*, He had said. *Remember*,

was His command. All the while she was working alongside her daughters, she thought about His curious and important message delivered to her and Adam. Sometimes she would catch herself looking off into the distance absently. She had to force herself to concentrate on her work, and still her thoughts drifted from her tasks and her normally pleasant conversation with her girls.

At the end of the day, after supper, the family once again encircled the roaring fire. One of her daughters spoke up. “Mother, you have been distracted today. Is there something wrong?”

Eve brought her hot herbal drink to her lips, inhaling the soothing aromas of mint and lemon as she considered how best to answer this question.

“Yes, children, I... I have been distracted, as you say.” She paused again, then decided to speak plainly. “Early this morning before I arose, the Voice of God came to me in the wind.”

“What did He say?” the children exclaimed, their voices a mixture of excitement and anxiety at the same time.

“Well,” Eve replied, “He said simply ‘*teach your children*’.”

“Did He mean us, Mother?”

“Yes, I believe so, dear ones.” Eve said slowly.

“Did He say more?” queried Seth, “As in *what* you are supposed to teach us?”

“No, Seth, He just said ‘*teach your children*’.”

All eyes turned to Adam as he began to speak his churning thoughts. “I have been dwelling on this all day long,

just as you have, Eve. I believe that He means for us to teach you children about Him, and His wonders, and perhaps even about our own mistakes and failures.”

“Yes, Adam, now that you say it, I know that you are right. This is what the Lord wants from us: to teach our children about Him!” Eve responded with excitement. “When shall we begin?”

“I should think,” said Adam reverently, “that when you hear His Voice, which has been silent for over a hundred years, you had better do His bidding quickly.

Taking her usual place beside Adam, Eve asked the children if they would like to hear a story.

“Oh, yes, Mother!” they cried. They pressed closer, so they would hear every word of the tale she was about to tell.

“Yes, but what shall we tell them about first?” Eve said, who was eager to do God’s bidding, but was unsure where to start.

“Well, starting at the very beginning seems wise, does it not, Wife?”

“Yes, Husband, but if we are to start at the beginning, then you had better go first. Because children, Adam was created before I was. You see, we were not born into the world like each of you. In fact, we were never tiny babies or even half-grown children. The truth of it is that Adam lived several hours before the Creator fashioned me. So, go ahead, Adam, tell them how it all started.”

Adam cleared his throat and said, “Alright then, we will tell you of the garden and the very first days of the world. Children, draw close to me and feel my skin, touch my hair,

look into my eyes. Would you believe the Creator God formed me out of the very dust of the ground? Your mother had an even more startling beginning.” Adam winked at Eve. “Now, can you imagine the incredible power it takes to create a living, breathing creature from the dirt? We cannot imagine such might! But that is how powerful and mighty our God is.” The children pressed their toes into the soft dirt at their feet as they contemplated their father’s words.

“After six days of bringing our world into existence¹, he chose to create a likeness of Himself. And I am he. The Master Creator who spoke a single word and the earth appeared, also made me.” Adam thumped his chest with both hands. “I am humbled when I think of it because He is so great and majestic. He says that I bear His likeness. Simply amazing!” he said, shaking his head.

“Father,” Seth interrupted, “What does Creator look like? Does He look like you?”

“That, my son, is a most challenging question! No, He does not look like me. I am but a dim reflection of Him. He has features, such as we do, but He is everything that we are not. His eyes are like fire, piercing and yet warm and inviting. His mouth issues words that ring with strength and authority. The earth trembles when He speaks.” Adam paused as he considered how else to describe His Friend from the garden.

Eve spoke, “His legs are like towers of might; his arms are like wings, downy soft within His embrace.”

¹ To read the full story of how God created the earth and everything in it, read Genesis 1-2 in the Bible.

“You know, Eve,” Adam continued. “There were times in the garden when I marveled why our Friend had created the sun. Yes, I knew it was a magnificent sphere giving us light. But we already had light, for He was our light, and the sun... well, it is only a dim reflection of Him. And the trees... were they not gorgeous, Eve? And yet, there were times also that I marveled that He had created them for He was our sustenance. He was our shelter. His arms provided our shade and rest. Of course, now I understand.”

“Tell us when you met Mother,” chimed in one of the children.

“Ah, your mother...What a delight she was to my eyes that very first day and she still is even now. I had been given the task of naming all of the animals, for God had given me dominion over them. I observed and commented to my Lord that I was different from the rest. Each of the animals had mates for companionship and to help populate the earth. I did not have such a mate.

“Upon hearing my words of dissatisfaction, Creator God immediately struck me down and I passed into a deep sleep. When I awoke, I felt a throbbing pain in my chest that at first I attributed to my unexpected fall. But then I saw her standing before me. She was the most beautiful creature I had ever seen. I found out later that she was fashioned out of one of my ribs, which, of course, explained the pain in my chest!”

Eve continued, “As soon as The Creator breathed life into me, I stood up, and there on the ground before me was your father, looking dazed. He was the first thing I ever saw in the Garden of Eden. Those were glorious days, were they not,

Adam? We were young and in love, carefree and in harmony with our Maker. Such days will never be again.”

“Why not, Mother?”

“Because of my disobedience, son. I ate of the forbidden fruit when I was explicitly told not to. I talked your father into eating as well.”

“Yes, dear, but you were deceived by that hideously beautiful serpent. Even so, I was, and still am, responsible for my own actions and disobedience. I could have made a different choice, but I, too, was lured by the serpent’s crafty deception.² I wanted the same thing that you wanted – power, glory and omnipresence. I wanted to be as great as the One who had created me! Oh, it is such a lie that the created could ever be as great and marvelous as the Creator. And yet I believed the serpent, just as you did, Eve.”

“Children, hear us well. This is when everything instantly changed. Before our Lord even appeared to us that evening in the cool of the garden, we knew we had done something terribly wrong. Our shame hung heavily upon us and we hid from Him behind the lush foliage. We were mortified! We had gone directly against the command of our gracious Friend. He told us that we could eat from any tree, except for one – He called it the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And yet that was the very tree that we did not resist.

“Before we even saw Him that evening, we heard Him calling our names. ‘Adam! Eve!’ The voice, in which

² To read the rest of the story about the serpent’s deception and the fall of mankind, read Genesis 3 in the Bible.

we once took boundless delight, now sent shivers of panic through our bodies! Our fear was well-founded, for that day we were cursed. After a pathetic attempt to dodge our own responsibility and cast the blame on others, we were driven from the Garden of Eden by the Lord's mighty angel, never to return. We were indeed cursed that day. We lost not only our home, our sustenance, and our peaceful way of life, but our daily intimate fellowship with our Maker as well. I was sent to toil in the fields and your mother was cursed with pain in childbirth."

"What happened to the serpent?" asked one of the girls. "It seems to me that he was perhaps the worst of all and certainly deserves some kind of punishment."

"Ah, the serpent," said Eve. "Yes, he too was cursed. He must forever slither along the ground on his belly, despised by the greater part of God's creatures, most prominently me. And the other half of the curse I did not understand. Something about him bruising the heel of my seed and my seed crushing his head.³ I did not comprehend this then, nor do I now. I do know that 'my seed' refers to our offspring, but I do not see how our children have yet or will in time 'crush this serpent's head'.

³ "The Seed of the woman is the Promised One, the coming Messiah of Israel. Bruise His heel speaks of a serious injury, but it is contrasted with the crushing of his head - the defeat - of the serpent, or Satan. When Jesus went to the cross, He was bruised in His heel. That is, he suffered a terrible but temporary injury (John 12:31; Col 2:15). In His resurrection, He defeated His enemy. From that moment on, Satan has lived on borrowed time. He is already defeated; only the announcement of victory needs to be made (see Rom 16:20)." From the Nelson Study Bible, copyright 1997 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission.

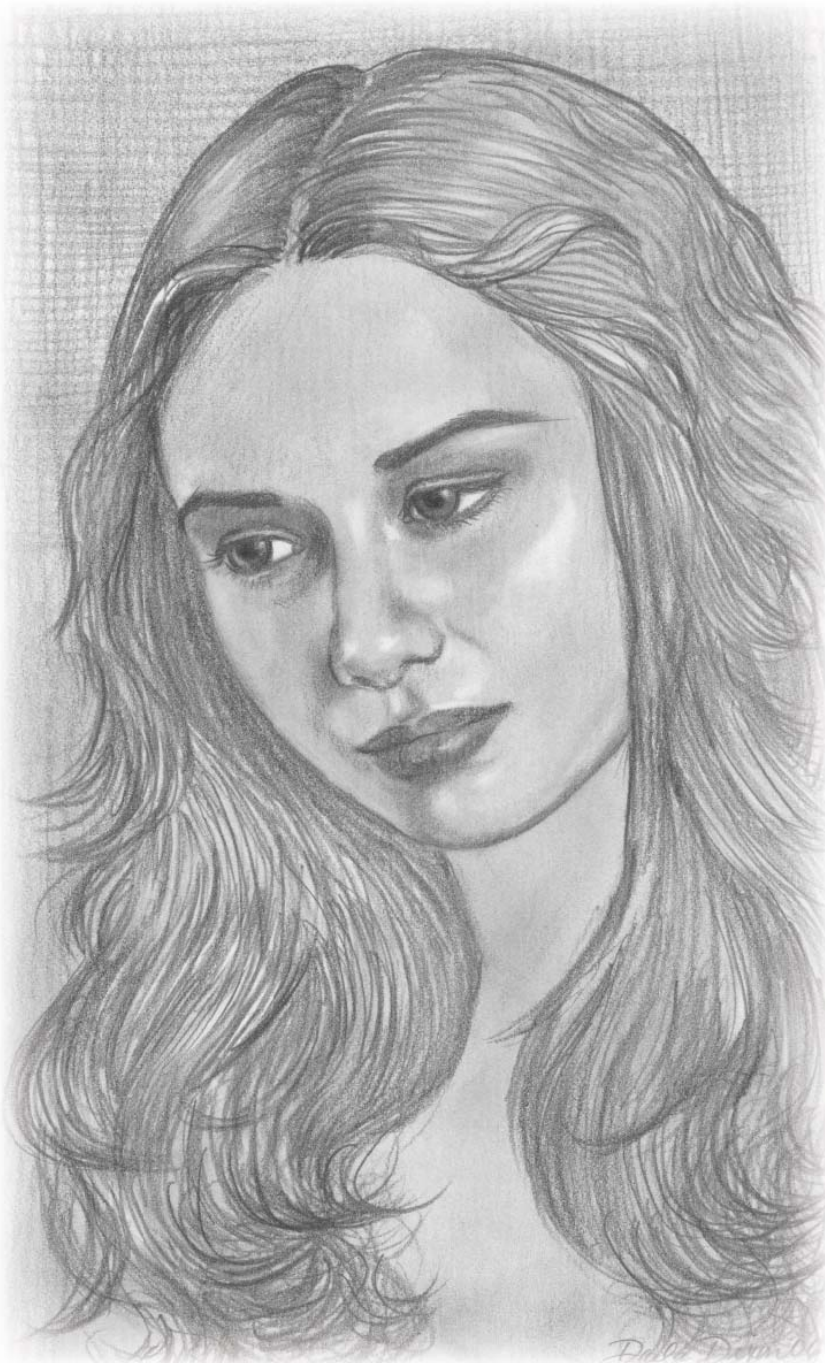
Some things in life remain a mystery, I suppose."

"Life outside the garden was barren and dry," she continued. "Our first days were miserable and we thought we would perish. We were hungry, dehydrated and bitterly cold when the sun went down at the end of the day. Our first task was to find a reliable water source and set up shelter. Then, without delay, your father set to work and, after much toil, raised a handful of crops for harvest, and gathered a good number of animals to shepherd and butcher for food. As time wore on, my belly began to expand and I felt movement inside. Lo and behold, I was with child! Upon his astonishing and painful birth, we named him Cain. He was the joy of my life. Some years later, Abel was born. His birth was just as astonishing and certainly just as painful! Yet, he was the delight of my soul. Were those not amazing years, Adam? Those rambunctious boys kept us hopping, so full of energy, so full of creativity. We could never sit still as they were always getting into trouble!⁴ Ah, I loved them with all my heart!"

Eve dropped her head into her hands and began to sob. How could a mother describe the loss, the pain, the heartache? How could she describe the deep ache that squeezes her heart whenever she reflects on her short time with her beloved boys? *Oh Father, she breathed desperately, Only You can heal my grieving heart!*

"But Cain still lives, Mother. Does this not bring you any comfort?" Seth asked tenderly, intuitively feeling his mother's agony.

⁴ To read the exciting tale of Cain and Able, turn to Genesis 4 in your Bible.



“Cain walks in sin and defiance against the Lord. He does not recognize his Creator, nor the parents who raised him. It is as though we have two dead sons.” Adam placed his arm about his wife’s trembling shoulders and continued, “Children, we made some grievous mistakes with our two older boys. We did not teach them diligently about the Lord, our Maker and our Friend. Now I see that this is what He wants us to do differently with you. He wants us to teach you about Him so that you can lead a long and purposeful life in the land⁵, so that you can tell your children and your grandchildren after them. Listen to our stories as we tell them to you tonight and again tomorrow and the night after that, for we still have much to tell. We have painful stories to share with you as well as ones that will bring much laughter and joy. Remember them and tell them to your children and to your children’s children. Bind these stories of our Lord on your hearts and minds, so that sin and disobedience do not overtake you.”

Silence descended upon the small family as they huddled together about the dying embers of the fire. The darker the night became around them, the more brilliantly the stars shone overhead. No one wanted to speak and yet no one wanted to leave. Eve looked from her husband of many years to her young children who had full lives yet ahead of them. Her mother’s heart longed for a way to keep them always safe – from temptation, from sin, from the angry hand of another.

⁵ To read about Seth’s “long and purposeful life in the land”, read Genesis 4: 25-5:8 in your Bible.

Yet she knew that she could only do the bidding of her Lord. At this moment, she realized with an inexplicable assurance, all was well. She would rest and take comfort in this thought tonight. As if by an unspoken cue, their three children stood and crept quietly into the tent. Adam and Eve followed behind.

The End

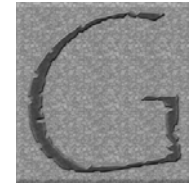
About the Authors:

Terri Johnson is the creator of Knowledge Quest maps and timelines (www.knowledgequestmaps.com). Her mission for the company is to help make the teaching and learning of history and geography enjoyable for both teacher and students. She has created and published over 20 map and timeline products. Her *Blackline Maps of World History* have been widely recommended in the education community and published in *The Story of the World* history series by Susan Wise Bauer. Terri and Knowledge Quest recently won the “Excellence in Education” award granted by The Old Schoolhouse magazine for best geography company of 2003 and 2004. Terri resides in San Antonio, Texas with her husband Todd and their five children whom she teaches at home.



Nicole Johnson is Terri’s eldest daughter. She has three younger sisters and one brother who keep her entertained most of the time. Nicole, who is 12 years old, has homeschooled since kindergarten. She has many hobbies and pasttimes, when she is not doing her schoolwork. She enjoys reading, writing, sewing, making candles, swimming and spending time with friends. She loves the rain and the beauty of nature. Nicole stays in touch with her long distance friends through the convenience of modern email and blogging.

*To all who believe that without knowing our history, we
will not have much of a future.*

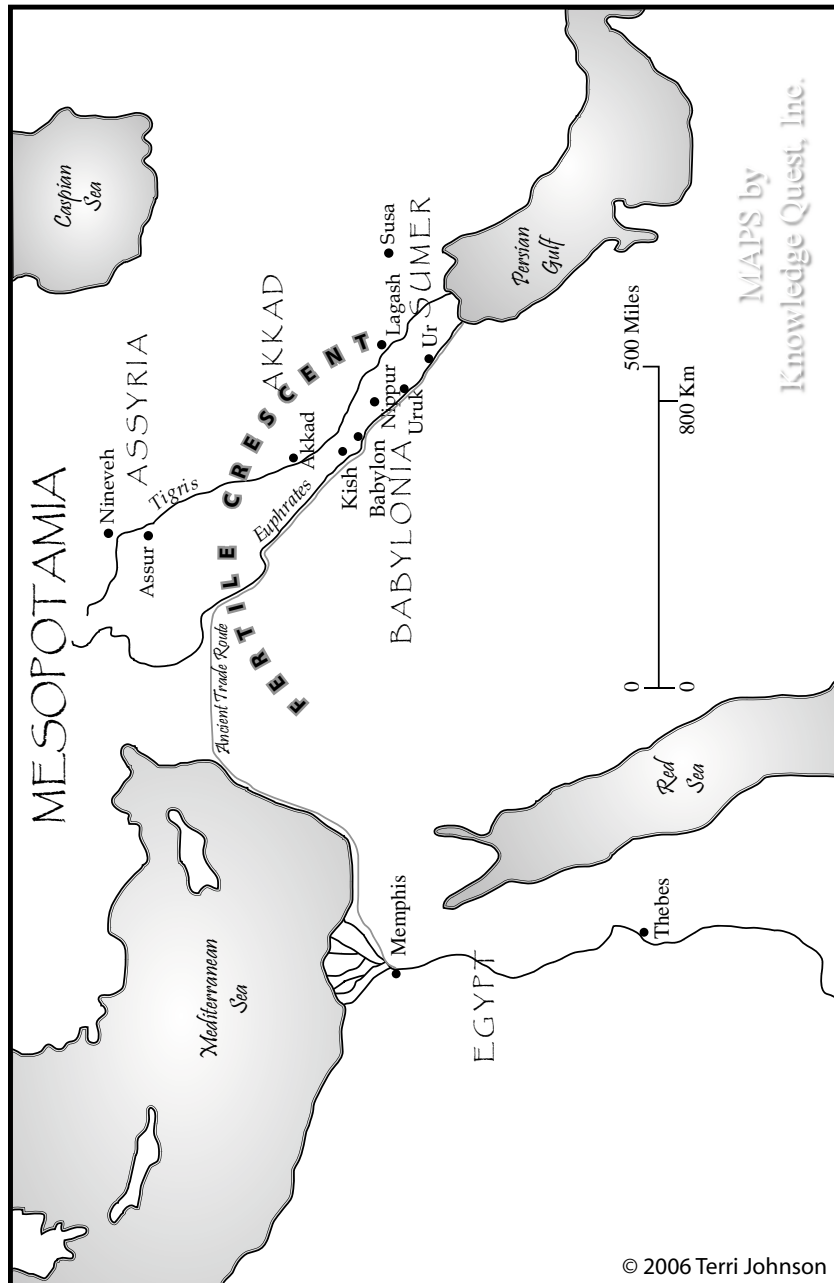


Gilgamesh

A Tale of Two Friends

by N.R.S. Laurents

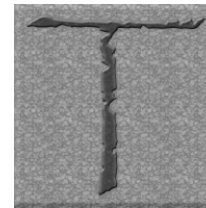




3 Gilgamesh

A Tale of Two Friends

by N.R.S. Laurents



The sun was beating down hot and bright. The broad river flowed lazily in the summer's heat, lapping the muddy shore, touching the hulls of the many barges and boats lying on the banks. The tall mud-brick ramparts of Uruk rose imposingly into the deep-blue sky just to the north, sheltering huts, houses, palace and temples alike from the sun's rays. An afternoon breeze rustled the reeds along the river. It rose off the shallows, flapping the sails of the fishing boats and the bright shifts of the sailors, ran through the shady orchards of apple and pomegranate trees, passed over the towering outer walls and swept across the city, stirring the fronds of the acacia and palm trees.

On the roof garden of the royal palace, Gilgamesh the

king stretched sleepily as the breeze ruffled his dark hair where he lay amid cushions by the side of a shallow pool. Its waters stirred, glittering under the sun, the deep blue of the sky nearly as dark as the glazed azure tiles lining the shallow basin.

There was none greater in Uruk than Gilgamesh. Born the son of King Lugalbanda, his mother was the goddess Ninsun, who was unsurpassed in beauty and loveliness by any mortal woman in the lands through which the rivers Euphrates and Tigris flowed. In manhood, he was tall, strong as a wild bull, and as handsome as a god. The people of Uruk liked to boast that this was because Gilgamesh was, after all, only one-third a man and two-thirds a god.

His accomplishments, regal stature and good looks notwithstanding, Gilgamesh also had his share of pride and arrogance, often using his royal power in ways the people disliked. He exulted in proving his physical prowess in combat with anyone under a staid middle age. Since he invariably won all such contests, the townspeople had many of their sons either to mourn or to take to the temple healers. Gilgamesh also had a keen eye for beauty, and cheerfully pursued all the prettiest women of Uruk, whether married or not.

So, as much as he was admired and regarded with pride by his subjects for his kingly might and magnificence, many grumbled about his high-handed ways, and earnestly prayed to their gods to curb the king's destructive whims. It is said that the gods took heed and made another man very like Gilgamesh in order to direct him toward more acceptable pursuits. That man was called Enkidu, and he lived in the wild.



While Gilgamesh relaxed in Uruk, Enkidu was running on the grassy plains with the deer and the antelope. He, too, was strong, fleet of foot, not quite as tall as Gilgamesh, but dark and handsome, with long black hair flowing down his back. He was a wild man and lived among the wild animals of the grasslands. He drank at their waterholes and helped them by filling in the pits dug by trappers. Together they ran free across the fertile plains of the broad river valley, slept out under the stars, and roamed far from the cities of Sumer to the feet of the forested mountains of the north and east. Over time, a trapper in the area wearied of losing his prey and finally took a beautiful woman named Shamtar to meet Enkidu, to entice him away from the wild animals.

Shamtar was a priestess of Ishtar, the goddess of love, and Enkidu was as impressed with her beauty as she was with his splendid good looks. He left the wild, and they went to live among the shepherds of the plains, where Enkidu protected their herds from lions and learned the ways of civilized men. It was there he heard tales of Gilgamesh, king of Uruk, of his grandeur, his prowess in combat, his strength in battle. While Enkidu had lost some of his strength and swiftness since leaving the wild, he was still as strong as a savage bull and the shepherds admired him greatly. Hearing about the famous king of Uruk, Enkidu grew curious and decided to visit the great city to challenge Gilgamesh to a trial of strength.

Late one afternoon, as the hot breeze died down over the marshes and the city came alive with music and dancing, Enkidu approached Uruk's southeastern gate. For miles he

had followed the river road through small farms and large estates, their fields of wheat and barley stretching far across the plain. The trade road from Ur passed through Uruk to Kish and was much traveled by foot-sore commoners, proud herdsman leading their flocks, and merchants stringing along camels laden with the riches of Sumer. In the distance, where the river broadened into a silver band, barges showed like dark smudges against its shining surface, and smaller reed-boats dipped their oars as they moved along the horizon.

Enkidu marveled at the many new and splendid sights, but nothing had prepared him for his first glimpse of the city, surrounded by fields and orchards, spread between the road and the river. Uruk's walls and gate-towers, fashioned from millions of sun-dried bricks made from the mud of the life-giving river, rose majestically into the darkening sky. Just visible above the wall were the temples on their proud ziggurats, with the tops of many slender date palms lending a touch of color. As he neared the gate, Enkidu joined a stream of travelers hurrying to enter the city before the gates closed at full dark

He moved with the crowd along the broad street leading into the center of Uruk, where the large temples and the royal palace were located. The street was lined with one- and two-story mud-brick houses where artisans, merchants and scribes lived. To right and left, narrow roads and winding lanes led into busy bazaars and bustling markets. Down one, Enkidu could see fruit-sellers' wares displayed under large woven tarps strung between the houses to provide shade for customers and merchandise alike. Down another he saw the meat market,

along with sellers of grains and cereals. Further on he saw a street crowded with women eager to select the best the wool-vendors had to offer, to turn into finely spun yarns and the hand-loomed cloth for which Uruk was famous. Cloth from Sumer could be traded as far north as Kanesh in Anatolia for jewels or gold.

Finally, Enkidu reached the foot of the temple of Anu and Ishtar and stopped to stare in awe at the gigantic structure before him. The temple, as was the custom, was built on a tall ziggurat, to raise it high above the recurring flood-waters. Many terraces and steps led up to the temple, which was decorated with colorful tiles and imported wooden columns. The wild man had never seen so grand or so glorious a building. It seemed even to rival for height the forested slopes of the far mountains where Enlil, father of the gods, had set Humbaba the giant to watch the trees.

Around the bottom of the ziggurat sprawled a large number of huts and houses, a whole city within a city. Craftsmen, servants, priests, and slaves lived and worked at the foot of the temple mount, to serve the gods, to earn their goodwill for the people of the town.

Turning aside, Enkidu saw his goal in sight. The royal palace was only slightly less impressive than the temple, its gate decorated with large stone tablets depicting heroic deeds by past kings in finely carved relief. The huge double doors stood open and two armed soldiers idly watched the open square. Enkidu strolled across purposefully.

"I am a stranger to Uruk," he hailed one of the guards. "Is this where Gilgamesh, king of Uruk, has his abode?"

The soldier had turned his head to watch his approach, his eyes round with wonder at the unusual height and exotic bearing of the stranger. Not only was Enkidu taller than average, deeply tanned below his dark locks, and broadly muscled, but over his plain tunic he wore a gorgeous lion-skin stretched across his shoulders. The soldier goggled at the man who wore it so casually.

"Indeed, sir, this is the king's palace," he answered. "If you have come to have speech with him, you must hurry: The king is about to leave for the house of Amrahel the councilor, to attend his daughter's wedding."

This was unwelcome news to Enkidu. For a moment he stood in thought, debating whether to postpone his errand until the next day.

"The house of Amrahel is only a short way down the street," the guard said, interrupting his reverie.

Enkidu's eyes flashed. "I will await the king there," he decided. "Where do I find this house?"

After listening closely to the guard's explanation, he nodded with satisfaction. "My thanks for your aid."

He turned away from the palace gate and headed back across the square to reach the tree-lined street the man had indicated. It better suited his purpose to challenge the king on his way to a private celebration than to accost him in his own palace, in front of his servants and ministers, on his throne perhaps, gorgeously appareled and bedecked with jewels and all the insignia of his high rank. Tonight, he might hope to find the king walking alone, or at least with few to witness their encounter, and in clothing more suited to a fight.

In keeping with his resolve, Enkidu did not enter the house of Amrahel the councilor once he reached it. Instead, he positioned himself across the narrow street in a dark doorway and observed the stream of festively dressed visitors. However, no one immediately came who fit the description the shepherds had given him.

His time spent running with the wild antelope of the plains had taught Enkidu patience, and he was inured to waiting. No lion stalked his prey with more quiet determination than he that night, awaiting the coming of the king. Enkidu expected to meet the king with little delay. His composure, however, remained unshaken two hours later when the noisy celebration and the busy town alike began to settle down for the night.

Finally a late wanderer turned up the street. Enkidu straightened eagerly at the sight of the tall, proud figure. When a stray beam of light showed a glint of gold on the man's brow and on his shoulders, he stepped out of his shadowy corner into the road.

Gilgamesh strode along with careless grace, eager for a look at the youthful bride. He invariably arrived only after the ceremonies of the given occasion were over, as much because lengthy rituals bored him, as out of a certain unconscious arrogance. He did not like crowds, and preferred to make himself scarce.

As he neared the house, he became aware of a man directly in his path, barring his progress in a quietly determined fashion that Gilgamesh had never experienced in all his days as

crown prince or king. His respectful subjects assiduously made way for him and his servants whenever he appeared in public, bowing to him from a deferential distance.

Nonplussed, Gilgamesh halted a few paces from the stranger. From the light of the newly risen moon and the illuminated windows up and down the street, he viewed with amazement the wild figure clad in a lion's skin, the tanned face under the mane of black hair falling down upon shoulders as broad and powerful as his own. His hesitation lasted only a moment.

"Make way for the king," he demanded calmly, deeming the stranger's singular behavior more a matter of ignorance than of intentional insolence. "Behold, I am Gilgamesh, son of Lugulbanda, king of mighty Uruk. Out of my path, lest you suffer my displeasure for obstructing me."

Almost he moved on, taking instant obedience as much for granted as breathing. However, the stranger did not stir. Instead he spoke, and though his appearance was rough, his voice was pleasant enough.

"Mighty king, I have traveled far to meet you," Enkidu began. "Tales of Gilgamesh and his great strength and wondrous deeds have spread to the remote corners of Sumer and beyond." There was no subservience in his voice or humility in his stance. Instead, there was more than a hint of curiosity as he continued.

"I have heard much of you since I came to live among men, and it would fain seem all was true, for the like of you I have never seen, save when I have beheld my own image in the mirror-surface of a still pond on a calm day."

Being unused to the open scrutiny he met in the stranger's dark eyes, Gilgamesh raised his brows at his daring as much as at his odd tale. He could not suppress a smile as he returned the other's probing glance in equal measure.

"There does seem to exist a certain likeness of shape and coloring between us," he admitted after a closer look. "But tell me, are you man or god? And what is the purpose for which you have sought me?"

It was Enkidu's turn to smile, his face taut and eager: "Man am I, like you, O king, and made of the plain dust of the earth. I have come to Uruk to fight you, and test your strength against mine." And, dropping the heavy lion-skin to the ground a safe distance behind him, he stood at the ready.

The king's eyes lit with a fierce fire.

"Have you indeed?" he demanded. "Grant me time to strip off my royal accoutrements and a fight you shall have, and welcome."

When his opponent merely nodded, he proceeded to take off the thin ribbon of gold which kept his shoulder-length hair off his brow, the broad necklet of gold, lapis and stone-beads which he wore across his shoulders, and the two heavy, jewel-studded bangles off his sinewy fore-arms. Tucking his long tunic into his belt he crouched, balanced on the balls of his feet, his arms coming up as he asked:

"Ready?"

Enkidu lunged.

What followed brought half the population of the street out upon them and wrecked the fronts of no less than three of the nearest houses. Locked in a tight embrace, the two men

swayed back and forth, their feet pounding the dusty ground as they moved first to the right, then across the street to the left where Gilgamesh backed into a wooden doorpost with enough force to shake the porch it supported. Another onslaught of the heaving bodies pushed the post off its foundation altogether, and some brick dust sifted down on the fighters' backs as the sturdy cedar post thudded into the road.

Hooking one foot around Enkidu's right ankle, Gilgamesh pulled the leg out from under him, and both fell together as the challenger lost his balance. The king was uppermost to start with, but soon fortunes were reversed as Enkidu got one strong arm around the other's throat. Nearly out of air, Gilgamesh was beginning to see dark spots swimming before his eyes when the wild man forced him undermost and sat on his chest with all his considerable weight.

A nearly super-human effort dislodged Enkidu just long enough for the king to lunge to his feet, and soon Gilgamesh was trying his best to throttle his opponent. Muscles bulged, bones creaked, the dust rose about their feet in veritable clouds, while people from the neighboring houses kept a safe distance, awed as much at the forces unleashed by the struggle, as dismayed at the destruction wrought by the two combatants.

Another porch got smashed as Enkidu managed to break the king's grip on his windpipe. Then for a while both men grappled with each other, bashing into the surrounding walls, plaster and fragments of dried mud liberally raining down upon their shoulders. Neither seemed able to get an advantage over the other, equally matched as they were. Both were determined to win the fight.

Suddenly, Gilgamesh bent his knee, took Enkidu around the waist, and heaved with all his might. Surprised, the wild man did not immediately defend himself as the king lifted him bodily off the ground. With a tremendous effort Gilgamesh threw Enkidu from him, several paces across the street, only to hasten after him and kneel on his chest.

The fall had knocked the breath so thoroughly out of him that at first Enkidu could do nothing but gasp for air, choking on the dry dust. When he found himself pinned by the king's great weight and looked up into the fierce, eager face above him, suddenly Enkidu laughed as he relaxed.

"I make my submission. You have won!" he declared, still chuckling. "But next time take care--you have taught me a new trick this day, which I will know well how to evade when we meet again."

Gilgamesh rose, freeing him, but looked on puzzled as the wild man got to his feet.

"Why do you laugh? It was a fair fight."

Enkidu nodded, but could not help smiling. "Indeed it was. I did not mean to imply aught else. Just look at us, though: Your own men could not tell us apart after this dust-bath of ours!"

Gilgamesh followed his counsel and found himself smiling in turn: They resembled tall clay statues, covered from head to foot in thick reddish dust that hid the color of their hair, the weave of their raiment, the tone of their skin. Almost identical in build and height, even their stature could not give away their identity; only the length of their hair allowed any distinction between them, for even the features of their faces lay

disguised under layers of dust, tracked by runnels of sweat, and coated in pieces of plaster that had stuck to them as they rolled on the ground.

At last Gilgamesh glanced at the towns-people watching them from a safe and suspicious distance and he too laughed.

"You are right; they do not know what to make of us. We could be sons of the same mother, you and I, so alike are we in everything, even our strength. It was a glorious fight! I have never come this close to being bested, and if we fight again, the end of it might easily be different, for we are evenly matched. Come, let us not remain rivals! We were surely destined by the gods to be brothers."

He embraced the wild man and they laughed again together as some of the plaster fell off their clothes at the touch.

"I've not had a friend before," Enkidu admitted. "It will be something new for both of us."

Gilgamesh nodded: "There never was anyone to hold his own against me before. We must test your skill with weapons. Just think of the great deeds two men like us could accomplish together!"

Enkidu noticed that the thought seemed to please the king greatly, and smiled again.

"Perhaps we had better fix this mess and get cleaned up first," he suggested, a twinkle in his dark eyes.

Gilgamesh raised one dusty brow as he looked around at the settling clouds of dirt, the shattered porches, and the fallen plaster.

"I suppose we ought to," he said, and there was a note of surprise in his voice, as though he had just discovered the

damage they had caused. "I shall give orders immediately." He waved peremptorily to one of the more respectable of the onlookers.

"You there, I shall hold you responsible for seeing to it that these houses are repaired properly. When the work is done, send to the palace and present your bill to the royal treasurer."

The man bowed in acknowledgement of the royal command, and Gilgamesh put one hand on Enkidu's shoulder.

"Now, let us be off to the palace for a bath, for I confess I certainly need it. You will accompany me, won't you?"

Enkidu had been a silent onlooker as the king so summarily dealt with the business at hand. Now he cocked his head to one side to look up at Gilgamesh, his gaze thoughtful.

"That depends, O king. I do not mean to spurn the hospitality you so generously offer, but I fain would know what position you would have me assume in your household. I am used to being my own master, not any man's servant."

Gilgamesh blushed under the thick covering of dust and sweat that hid his features. "I thought we agreed to be friends and brothers," he protested. "No servant of mine shall you be, and my household and subjects shall treat you as though you were another son born to my own mother. If you found my invitation lacking in civility, I crave your pardon: I am more used to giving orders than speaking to men who are my equals."

The twinkle back in his eyes, Enkidu reached up to lay his right on the king's hand.

"Your invitation was courteous enough, and if you yet

lack anything in the consideration of others, I will endeavor to teach it you, as a good friend should," he said. "I have always found it sound procedure to treat all honest men as my equals, and as such, entitled to my respect in equal measure, be they commoner or king."

There was a wave of appreciative murmuring among the bystanders, but the wild man continued, as though he had not noticed:

"In the meantime, a bath would be very welcome, so we had better collect our things and be off or the sun will find us still talking when it comes to look down upon Uruk in the morning."

Gilgamesh bent down to pick up the royal insignia which he had so unceremoniously shed at the start of their fight, then said, as Enkidu did likewise with his belongings, "Perhaps afterwards, while we eat, you will tell me the story that lies behind that magnificent lion-skin of yours, for I love nothing better myself than a hazardous hunt, unless it be a glorious fight at arms."

Seeing the light in his eyes, Enkidu smiled again, and of his own accord embraced the king this time.

"Gilgamesh, you shall hear the story, and we will have many wonderful bouts against each other. Truly there is not another like you among men, and it is no wonder with your great strength and skill that you were chosen by the gods to be king."

"For my part," he continued, "I shall be eager to hear the stories you have to tell of the world, for I know you have traveled much, and I have never been farther from the plains

that raised me than this city of yours. Thus we shall teach each other many new things, and have great adventures together, if that is your desire and the will of the gods. Men will tell yet more tales of your exploits to their children, and their children's children, until the end of time. Such are the rewards of a truly noble friendship."

The king nodded. "That is a fair bargain and a glorious future to contemplate, though in all honesty, I doubt anyone will remember me for more than a few generations." He chuckled unexpectedly: "Then again, perhaps the two of us together will raise enough dust for the tales of our fame to make a more lasting impression. Come, we shall talk more of this!"

So saying, they walked off down the street, hand in hand.

In the weeks that followed, Gilgamesh set his heart on undertaking an excursion to the distant mountains, where large cedar forests grew, to cut down the mighty cedars said to be guarded by the giant Humbaba. No trees with wood of comparable quality grew near Uruk, and to build great edifices and adorn the temples, hardwood trees were a necessity.

The members of the council of Uruk warned that to take the cedars belonging to the gods would cause trouble. Enkidu warned that to incur the displeasure of the gods would surely bring misfortune upon Gilgamesh and any who went with him. But the king did not heed their advice. Instead, he ordered made a set of splendid new weapons, worthy of a daring undertaking and spectacular deeds of valor.

Gilgamesh knew he needed the blessing of the gods for the quest to prosper, so he went to ask Ninsun, his mother, to

petition their favor. She willingly did so, but also came up with another way to ensure his safety. She officially adopted Enkidu as a son and charged him to go with Gilgamesh on his perilous journey and to do everything in his power to bring him safely home. Enkidu assented. If he could not talk Gilgamesh out of the dangerous venture, he would brave the ire of the gods and the might of the giant guardian of the trees to fight at the side of his friend and brother.

Ecstatic, Gilgamesh promptly had another set of weapons made for Enkidu to match his own. Each received a magnificent axe, bejeweled sword, and bow.

The two adventurers were far from Uruk and nearing the mountains by the time it occurred to Gilgamesh that his companion was in a less than boisterous mood. Relaxing in front of the shelter they had built for the night, at the small cook-fire lit to heat up their evening meal, Gilgamesh watched as Enkidu sat silent, his powerful arms clasped around his knees, his dark eyes fixed unwaveringly on the flames.

"Tell me the thoughts in your heart, my friend," Gilgamesh said finally, resting his chin on his arms.

Enkidu looked up with a hint of a smile. "You know them already," he suggested. "From the first, I told you that this enterprise to cut cedars will likely bring the wrath of the gods upon us, if Humbaba doesn't kill us first."

Gilgamesh nodded. "You have told me so, and the elders of Uruk have said much the same. Yet my mother asked the favor of Shamash to be upon us, and though your heart isn't in this venture, I know it is not because you are a coward. So we

will fight the giant together, and together we will conquer. The tale of our travels will be sung throughout the cities of Sumer and our names will be great in the hearing of men."

Enkidu looked at him, the gaze of his dark eyes steady.

"Have you ever seen the giant?"

Gilgamesh shrugged. "No, I have never gone this way before," he admitted. "Yet, how daunting can he be? Why, they call anyone a giant who is taller than most men!"

Enkidu laughed, but without real mirth.

"If you think rumor has exaggerated his size or his prowess, my brother, don't be deceived. I have seen Humbaba from afar when I was running with the animals of the plains. He is a full head taller than either one of us, and his arms are each the thickness of a sturdy cedar. What's more, the gods shield him with their might."

"That may be so, or not," Gilgamesh commented with a shrug. "In any case there are two of us against his one, and we are not inexperienced in the arts of combat. Or has your heart grown faint within you?"

"Not at all," Enkidu replied with a sigh. "The matter bodes ill with me. But if you are determined to do this, I must go with you. Our hearts must be fearless lest we risk all. So let us take what sleep we may, and go on tomorrow to meet the giant. We are near the edge of the forest already, and it is said that he knows immediately when someone enters it, though he be far away."

"Old wives' tales, most likely," Gilgamesh scoffed, as he pulled the fags apart to put out the fire. "I am glad you are not turning back, though. Vanquishing the giant would be little

pleasure to me without you by my side, my friend."

Enkidu nodded, stretching himself out in his blankets within their shelter. "So be it, then. Sleep well, my brother."

When at length they reached the forest, Gilgamesh marveled at the girth and the height of the trees. The sheer loftiness and density of the forest giants allowed no ray of sunlight to penetrate to the forest floor except in rare clearings. As he wandered about, eagerly inspecting the trees, Enkidu stood listening for any sign of the guardian giant's approach. What he heard instead was the thud and whack of a great axe nearby, and whirled to see Gilgamesh energetically attacking the trunk of a stately cedar.

In the distance an angry shout went up, followed by a far-away roll of thunder.

"The giant comes" Enkidu shouted over the noisy axe-strokes to warn Gilgamesh. The king nodded but did not stop his efforts, and the cedar was felled before they saw aught of its appointed guardian.

When Humbaba appeared there was little time for them to worry about his exact height, or the best strategy for their attack. He was huge, he was angry, and he was upon them in a flash.

Gilgamesh stood rooted to the ground, axe in hand, while Enkidu drew his knife. As the giant turned towards the king, Enkidu realized that panic must have seized his friend at the awful sight of Humbaba. Enkidu could not fault Gilgamesh for his reaction. The giant was clothed in filthy rags, his face and skin streaked with dirt and dried blood, his hair tangled

with roots and vines of the forest. His bulging eyes glared at them with hatred, and his crooked teeth were pointed and sharp, like the teeth of a wild beast about to tear its prey.

With a shout, Enkidu leaped to the ready in case of need. Luckily Gilgamesh heard his brother's voice, and with a cry, jumped back out of the giant's path, his momentary paralysis overcome. His axe flashed, and his first downward stroke bit deep into the giant's neck as the monster rushed by. With a tremendous roar of rage and pain, the giant turned.

A harsh gust of wind swept through the clearing, and a sudden rush of swirling dust blinded the giant, allowing Gilgamesh to strike a second time. Thunder rolled close by, clouds rushed across the mighty tree-tops as they bent before the wind. A third blow finished the creature off. His heavy body fell to the ground, his hideous face hidden from view, as a steady rain began to fall on the forest.

Enkidu stepped to his brother's side and gazed upon the dead thing that had been their fearsome foe. "You have slain him as you intended," he said. "The cedars of his forest are yours for the taking. But spare the far Cedar Mountains where the goddess Ishtar abides. Enlil will be angry enough as it is."

Panting from exertion, Gilgamesh shook himself as the rain began to run into his eyes. "I will. If I had realized how awful he was and how huge, perhaps I would have lent more of an ear to your warning. Why, he is just like a tree himself, only a lot more dirty."

At that, Enkidu could not help but laugh. "Oh, my brother, you have slain the giant with your axe, you have done the impossible and felled him like that cedar you took first. You

almost got yourself killed going up against him, and here you stand, marveling at the unwashed and filthy rags of him."

A sudden rueful grin lit the king's face at his words. "I suppose that is rather unimportant, considering what we've been through," he admitted. "I have never come this close to death. But for your shouts, I would surely have perished at the giant's hands. I owe my life to you, my friend."

They clasped hands, standing in the warm summer rain, the giant's dead body at their feet. Then Enkidu, ever practical, gave a sigh.

"I don't suppose that in addition to the axes, the royal weapon-smiths packed us any shovels?"

Gilgamesh looked puzzled. "No, why do you ask?"

"Unless we mean to leave this carcass to the wild beasts of the forest, we shall have to dig a sizable pit to bury it," Enkidu pointed out. "I can think of few tasks less pleasant."

The king looked around. "There are rocks in abundance here. Let us collect them, and cover his body with branches and stones instead."

Enkidu's face lit up with the first genuinely pleased smile since they had left Uruk. "I hasten to obey, O mighty king!" he joked, as Gilgamesh bent down to wipe the blade of his heavy axe in the grass. "And when you are done cleaning your weapon, you may as well start cutting the branches we'll need."

Thus did Gilgamesh and Enkidu vanquish the mighty Humbaba and return victorious and unharmed to Uruk, on a raft of cedar-trees they cut with their great axes in the giant's forest.

The tale of their adventure grew more unrecognizable

with each retelling, until Enkidu saw fit to warn the king not to believe a word of what the people were saying, for fear he would become conceited. Used to his teasing by now, Gilgamesh smiled at him with affection as they sat together, comfortably reclining by the side of the pool.

"I almost wonder if we had anything to do with it, it sounds so unfamiliar," he admitted. "Perhaps that is the way of great deeds: Once accomplished, they are no longer ours, but every man's, to do with as they please. They embellish the tale, they garble it, they lengthen or shorten, until nothing but the bare bones of the story remain true."

Enkidu nodded. "At least they have not entirely eliminated either one of us from it yet. And one good thing has come of our venture: You can have all the mighty cedars that you need for building even greater temples and palaces brought down the river. Your name will live long in the annals of Uruk."

Gilgamesh stretched and clasped his hands behind his head. "You know, now that I have you to keep me company, we have made a name for ourselves with such an heroic deed, and the building of the city is in a fair way to getting started, life is truly become more enjoyable than I thought possible. And I owe it all to you, my friend."

For once Enkidu felt the need to blush.

"Indeed you do not, my brother. What have I done? You have attained all that you speak by yourself. You won the contest that night I came to Uruk to challenge you, and thus turned my heart toward you in friendship. It was your axe that slew the mighty giant of the forest. In your wisdom it was

arranged to float the tall cedars along the course of the river. Without your vision, Uruk would be no grander than any other city of the plain. Without your eagerness for adventure, your life would be duller."

Gilgamesh nodded. "All you say has merit, and yet none of it would have come about but for your coming to seek me out. Were you not the man you are, no friendship would have grown between us, and I would not be the man I am today."

"When first you came to Uruk," Gilgamesh said, "I was but a headstrong youth. Now I am a man grown, for you have taught me to think before I act, and to consider well what I do. I have learned that even a king is no great thing in the eyes of his equals. Then there is the giant. Between you, you taught me to fear death and to love the life the gods have granted me, for I am also of the dust of the earth."

"All this," he continued, "I owe to you, though I suppose when one is both as strong as an ox and also as stubborn, new ways are not easily or speedily learned."

It was said with such unexpected humility that Enkidu was surprised. It seemed as though Gilgamesh had indeed learned much since his coming, little though he had guessed it. He smiled.

"If I have helped you to become a wiser and more responsible king, then I am content."

He shivered in the cool breeze from the river. The hot months were coming to an end, and an evening wind could be harsh on the exposed terrace. Gilgamesh noticed it and regarded him with fond concern.

"You are getting cold. I told you we should have taken

our meal below, after being out on the river all day.”

Enkidu smiled. “It is just the wind. The rains of winter will soon be upon us, and my tunic is not as thick as your cloak. I shall have to ask your mother’s women to weave me one just like it.”

“Consider it done,” Gilgamesh promised. “You will have it within the week.”

Though the cloak was duly woven and delivered, Enkidu did not get to wear it. Two days after they sent the first set of barges north to fetch cedar trees to Uruk, what had seemed a slight chill turned into a feverish ague, and Enkidu had to stay abed in his rooms.

For a week Gilgamesh did not leave his side, having all meals brought in for the two of them, trying to tempt his friend to eat and keep up his strength. All the while the fever steadily mounted, and the priests and priestesses in the temples kept busy making intercession on Enkidu’s behalf.

It was to no avail. The fevers of the river plain often attacked when the wet season first began. Though remedies abounded, few were strong enough to deal with an attack as powerful as the one that laid Enkidu low. He had little experience of sickness, but when his head and weak body were still burning on the eleventh day, he had no illusions about his fate.

When Gilgamesh returned from refilling the water-jug, it was to find silent tears coursing down his friend’s sunken, flushed cheeks, a look of dread in his dark eyes.

“My brother, I am afraid I shall be leaving you,” Enkidu

told him, his voice faint and hoarse, but resolute. “This is a journey I must go alone, and I fear it is a dark one. Will you stay with me until...” He could not bring himself to voice his great apprehension.

Gilgamesh sat on the bedside and took his burning hand in both of his, clasping it with an unwonted gentleness.

“Do not leave me yet,” he pleaded. “How shall I go on without you? You have taught me to love another more than myself, the brother I never had, the equal I sought for so long. How can you die now, when we have accomplished so much, when the time has come for me to repay what you have done?”

Enkidu clutched at his hand as the breath caught in his throat. “Promise to remember me and all we did together, then I can always be close to you in your thoughts, and the darkness of the netherworld will seem lighter,” he begged.

Gilgamesh nodded, anguish in his heart. “I myself will wear your great lion-skin, and the people of Uruk shall tell the stories of your coming and our battle with Humbaba every evening. I shall command a statue to be fashioned in your likeness as well, to be placed where I can see it daily.”

The faintest hint of a smile rewarded Gilgamesh as Enkidu relaxed with a sigh.

“My thanks, brother. I shall sleep more soundly now.”

He closed his eyes wearily. His grip on the king’s hand gradually slackened. Gilgamesh listened to the shallow breathing, continuing to sit beside his friend, until sleep overwhelmed him as well and his head sank forward onto their joined hands.

In the course of the night, unnoticed even by the

slumbering king, Enkidu the wild man passed from sleep into death. His great heart stopped beating, his breath ceased. Far beyond the city walls, a lone wolf raised its head to the moon passing above the plains and howled.

The End

About the Author



Ms. Laurents was born in Krefeld, Germany, a mid-sized town on the lower Rhine. Her family moved to Oakland, California when she was almost eighteen. She attended U.C. Berkeley for her undergraduate studies and then went on to Law School, where she met her husband. After they were married in 1989, they lived in Florida, her husband's native state. More recently they moved to the state of Washington. Their three children and miniature dachshund keep them busy.

*I dedicate this to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,
and to my darling husband, Edward, who has never
failed to believe in and love me.*

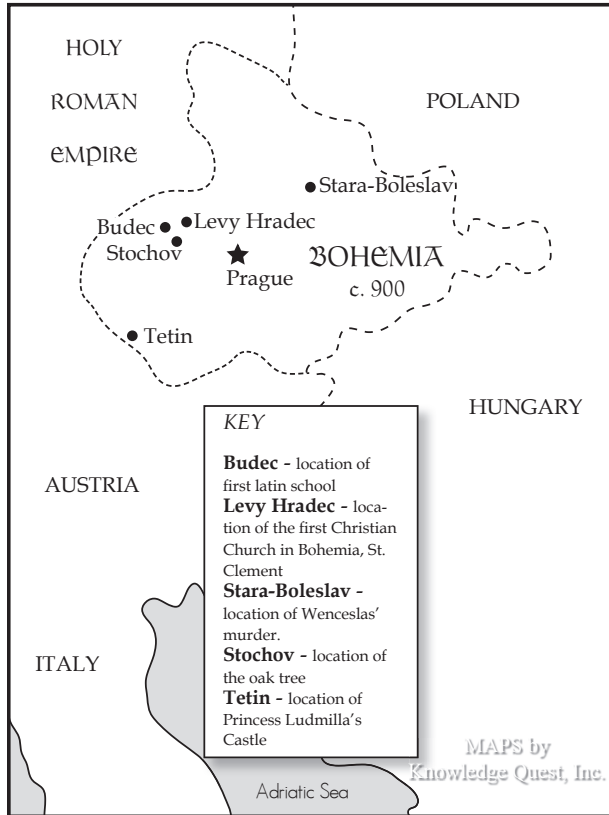


GOOD KING WENCESLAS

Duke of Bohemia

by Karla Akins





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4 GOOD KING WENCESLĀS

Duke of Bohemia

907 - 935 A.D.

By Karla Akins



now fell in tiny flakes and the wind blew as soft as a baby's breathing. Glistening wisps of sparkling white crystals danced around the tops of the trees. It was St. Stephen's Day in Prague, the day after Christmas. A crowd had gathered at the square to gawk and point at the sight before them. Some shouted, others whispered, and many ran to and fro, waiting for a chance to bid on their favorite item for sale.

"I'll give ye this pelt of otter and a bottle of mead for that lad there," a rickety little man with matted, gray whiskers shouted.

A young lad named Viktor sat on the ground in front of him trembling. His face was pale and his lips were chapped. Tears stung his cheeks in the cold winter air. He was tied to a post in the middle of the square, surrounded by other young boys, girls, and women, all bound to one another with leather

straps. Each of them sat on the ground with sad, tear-stained faces in front of a large, raucous crowd.

Viktor was for sale and he was scared. His father had died two weeks before and now he and his mother were to be sold as slaves to people from the Middle East and Africa. He sure hoped they would buy his mother along with him. He could not bear to be without her, and he knew she was more scared than he.

"This fine lad is worth a good sight more than that lousy pelt of yours and your stinking mead." The slave trader, a large, muscle-bound man with lustrous umber skin turned to Viktor. "Stand up boy," he sneered. Viktor stood and the slave trader ripped the thin tunic from his body. "See here?" he said to the little man pulling at his grimy beard, "This lad is healthy as an ox, and not a spot nor scar on 'im. Never a broken bone, and," the man looked through Viktor's curly locks of blond hair, "no lice, neither. He'll make the finest slave in your master's house!"

The man pulled again on his whiskers, squinted his eyes and looked over at his mother. The trader knew good and well slaves weren't nearly as valuable as cattle, and healthy or not, he was not going to pay more than a few pelts to get one of those puny slaves for his master.

"What about that wench there?" he nodded toward Viktor's mother, Ivana. "She's been hangin' on to the lad since the beginnin'. He her boy?"

"Aye," the slave trader said. "But she's not as strong as he is. Look at how scrawny she be." The slave trader lifted his mother's chin and his mother stared blankly back at him.

"Looks added to me, and not too smart."

"She's smart enough!" the boy yelled, struggling to get free. "She goes where I go!"

"Aye, a feisty one I see," said the bearded man. "Okay, ye got yerself a deal. Two pelts and a half-bottle a mead."

"Ye give me one of them auroch pelts, a knife and three bottles of mead and ye got yerself a deal," the slave trader said sternly. "He be a lusty, healthy lad, with a lot of years ahead of 'im."

A voice came up from the crowd: "I crave your pardon! I'll do ye better! I've two pelts of auroch, three swans, a blackbird pie and one skein of wine to give ye in exchange for the lad and his tunic!"

"Sold!" the trader said immediately, turning toward the familiar voice. It was that crazy Duke of Bohemia again, come to fetch another boy.

"And the maiden too!" the Duke shouted.

"The maiden too, aye," the trader said. "I doubt I can trade her elsewhere for such a fine price."

The man with the whiskers scowled and walked on, studying the other children and women for sale. That boy and his mother weren't worth what the Duke had paid, and it was more than he could afford today anyway.

The Duke gave the slave trader all that he had bid, and then walked over to Viktor and his mother with a twinkle in his eyes and a smile on his lips. Viktor looked into the face of the Duke as he untied the straps on his wrists. He wondered what fate had in store for him now. The Duke went toward his mother to untie her.

"Don't touch my mother!" he screamed. He was too afraid to jump on the Duke's back to stop him, even if he wasn't tied up, but he wanted to.

The Duke looked up at the young lad and smiled gently as he untied the ropes around his mother's wrists.

"Relax, lad," he said gently. "I will not harm your mother." Then he reached toward the boy and touched his shoulder. "Nor you. I am here to help you – not harm you."

He finished untying their feet and gave them each a crust of bread from his pocket.

"Thank you," the boy and his mother whispered, grateful for the bread and freedom from their bonds.

"Come hither," the duke said. "Follow me. We have but a short journey to the castle for more bread – and pottage as well. And then, lad, we'll find ye a new tunic."

Viktor's mother looked at him, frightened, but he tried to act brave for her. He was the man of the house now, and it was up to him to take care of her – even if they had no house of their own anymore.

"It's okay, Mum, the gods be watchin' that be sure. I said extra prayers today."

His mother nodded hopefully and they followed the kind Duke through the forest uphill to Prague castle. It was a long walk and the winter wind, though soft, was biting. Viktor was shivering, and the kind Duke put his cloak about his trembling shoulders.

"Anon you will be sitting in front of Katiana's fire, drinking warm milk and eating swan pie," he said. "Perchance a good washing down is in yer future – I could smell ye from

miles away!"

The Duke threw his head back and laughed at his own joke. Something inside of Viktor told him he didn't need to be afraid of this kind man. But he was still afraid. He sniffed at himself. He smelled just fine. The Duke must smell something else.

"What are ye going to do with us?" Viktor asked boldly, trying not to let his chin quiver.

"What do you suppose I should do with ye?" the Duke asked, his eyes twinkling.

"Let us go home," Viktor said.

"Pray thee, lad, what happened to cause ye to be standing in the slave trader's square?" the Duke asked gently.

"My father, a worthy and skilled candle maker was attacked by a wild boar," the boy said. "No matter how hard we prayed to the gods, the attack of the boar made his leg sick and he died. He couldn't do the candle making, and we couldn't pay our debts, so we were sold by our debtors to pay what we owe."

The Duke nodded. It was a common story these days. He hated seeing the children tied like animals to beams in the middle of Prague each week. The Arabs from the Middle East had an insatiable appetite for white slaves from Bohemia,¹ but not if he could help it. He bought as many children as he could each week. If only he could buy them all.

"Verily, young lad, tonight ye be not a slave. Tonight, ye be a guest of the Duke of Bohemia for the feast of St. Stephen's.

¹ Now Czechoslovakia

Ye and yer mother will dine at his table and eat his food. But not until ye get a new tunic!”

“Is the Duke a nice man?” Viktor asked meekly. “He doesn’t eat children and their mothers does he?”

The Duke threw back his head and laughed.

“Nay, he won’t be found eating children, lad. Ye won’t be the Duke’s dinner this night.” The Duke laughed loud and his voice echoed among the trees and fell like eiderdown into the freshly fallen snow. Ahead was the grand castle. Soon they would be at the bridge to cross the moat and then they would be inside. Viktor’s stomach rumbled impatiently. His toes were numb and his ears ached from the cold. He had never eaten swan pie. He could hardly wait.

“Ouch! I pray thee, stay! Stop it! Mercy!” Viktor wiggled and pulled away from the large, bulbous woman wiping at his face and ears.

“Settle down, Lad! I can’t clean ye when you’re wigglin’ so!”

When Viktor and his mother had arrived at the castle, they were ushered into an enormous kitchen, where servants bustled about plucking geese, pheasants, swans and a various assortment of other fowl. Mutton and pork were basting on spits, and bakers were kneading dark dough and baking breads. Other servants were decorating scrumptious meats, already roasted, to make them look as they did before butchering. One young lassie carefully placed a pheasant’s feathers back into the succulently roasted bird. Viktor’s nose nearly burst with joy

at the variety of delicious scents — aromas his nose had never before experienced or relished.

In front of a giant hearth — bigger than the cottage he and his mother had lived in before his father died — blazed the hottest fire Viktor had ever seen or felt. The woman washing him poured a pot of hot water over Viktor’s head and he howled even louder.

“Mama! Mama!” he cried. “Help!”

He had never taken a bath in his life! His mother had told him to never get wet. It could mean getting sick – and to get sick with even a cough could bring certain death. So why was his mother allowing this woman to do this to him? He was terrified and annoyed. He did *not* like the feeling of that hot water in his ears!

He wiped furiously at his eyes and opened them only to find his mother giggling with a young girl Viktor’s age. She was helping his mother put on a fresh tunic. Another girl was combing his mother’s hair. What was going on? Why was his mother giggling like that, and why didn’t she help him?

“The Duke deserves ye to be clean at his table, Lad,” the big woman named Katianna said. The more he wiggled the harder the woman scrubbed so he decided it would be better to stand still. But it wasn’t easy. This was his first bath – and he didn’t like it one bit!

“It will be okay, Viktor,” his mother spoke softly through her giggles. “I think we are safe now.” Then she began to cry. His mother had not acted like her real self ever since his father died. He could hardly figure her out these days. For so long she had taken care of him – but now he felt he needed to take

care of her.

“Pray tell — the duke — what is he like?” Viktor asked as the woman put a clean tunic over his head and helped put his arms through the holes.

“The Duke is the finest man in all Bohemia,” Katianna said. “He is kindly, good and generous.”

“Aye, that he is,” one of the young servant girls said. “And a Christian, too.”

“A Christian? What is that?” Viktor asked.

“It’s a long story,” Katianna said. “But, since it will take a while longer for the swans to roast — perhaps I can tell you. Do you like stories?” she asked.

Viktor nodded eagerly.

“Well, then, if ye sit very still and let me clean yer toes — I’ll tell ye the story of our good Duke Wenceslas.”

Viktor loved stories almost as much as he loved bread, so he sat on a stool and plopped his foot onto Katianna’s fluffy lap as she sat across from him. Her lap was soft as a pillow and he liked the sound of her smooth liquid voice as she spoke. Her cheeks were scarlet and her eyes shone with happiness in the reflection of the fire. He was feeling sleepy, but he fought to keep his eyes open by staring at her round cheerful face. He wanted to hear the entire story.

“Long ago, there were three beautiful sisters that ruled Bohemia. They were the daughters of Pace, the prince who started a school that taught religion, hymns, prophecy and magic. In those days, there was no writing, so the princesses had to memorize everything. In those days, magic was the highest form of learning.”

“And it is, indeed,” Viktor said, his eyes wide with attention.

“Says who?” asked Katianna, grimacing at the young man’s dirty feet.

“Why, says anyone ye ask, of course,” he said.

“Well, it’s not what the Duke would say, were ye to ask him,” one of the young girls named Dora said. “So don’t be sayin’ so at his table.”

Viktor crinkled his brow. *Why on earth would anyone not think that magic was the most important thing there was?* He looked at the lady cleaning his feet as she began again to speak.

“When the sisters’ father died, he had no sons, only his three beautiful daughters to take rule. There was Kazi, who used herbs and magic incantations to heal the sick. There was also Teta who was a pagan priestess, and Libuse a very wise pagan prophetess.

“The wise and beautiful Libuse ruled as a judge along with twelve of the wisest men in the realm. They sat under that Linden tree ye passed when ye came here. You know, the big fat, tall one with the gnarled arms?”

“Aye,” he said. “I saw that tree. Tis ugly and old it be.”

“Aye,” she said. “That be the one. And holy it was in those days for ‘tis where people married and worshipped the goddess, Freya.”

The lad nodded. He knew of that goddess, and all the others he and his mother worshipped.

“One day, when Libuse was judging an argument between two brothers, she decided in favor of the younger, and the older was made furious. He began to shout and bellow, ‘Why do

we men listen to a woman when we all know women have no brains!?"

"Have they none?" Viktor asked. He really didn't know. All his life he had been told women and children were worth less than cattle – perhaps it was a lack of brains that made it so.

The big woman slapped his leg with a thick hand. "Nay! They have as many brains as any man, and don't ye be forgettin' it!"

The women all laughed and Viktor rubbed his leg. It burned a little where the woman had slapped him, even though she had done it playfully.

"When the pretty and wise Duchess Libuse heard this, and saw that the crowd did not come to her defense, she said, 'Yes, I rule like a woman with kindness and mercy. But you think this means I'm weak. You want a harder, crueller ruler? Then your wish shall be granted.'"

"She sent for her sisters and they talked all night long. Then, she went into her secret garden and fell before the gold and wooden idol, Perun, who had a head of silver and a beard of gold.

"A few days later, a meeting was held between all the leaders of the clans. Every man wondered if he would be chosen as the husband of Libuse.

"'You did not appreciate your freedom while I was your ruler,' she told them. 'So I shall no longer be your ruler. Instead, my husband will rule you. He will demand the best of your herds and children for taxes whenever he feels like it and you will pay dearly for it. Would you like to choose my husband for me, or would you like my advice?' the Duchess

Libuse asked.

"'Advise us!' shouted the crowd. So the Duchess Libuse rose and with a far-away look in her eyes said to them, 'Go to the small stream called Bilina, and to the little village of Stadice. In the field you will find a plowman with two oxen. He is to be your Duke.'"

"And," one of the servant girls kneading dough said, "that's when she handed them clothes fit for a Duke to give him to wear."

"Yes," Katianna said, still cleaning between Viktor's toes. "And then she told them to follow her white horse. The white horse led them straight to a man named Premysl. She told them they would find him eating off of an iron table."

"And they did!" one of the other ladies in the kitchen said. She was basting venison over a fire in the other hearth.

"Yes," Katianna agreed, "and Premysl is the ancestor of the kind Duke Wenceslas. Now hold still. I have just one more foot to do, you little toad."

Viktor giggled. He had to admit that being clean was a feeling he liked very much, and seeing his mother smile made getting his toes cleaned all worth the while.

"When do we eat?" the lad asked the kind woman. He was beginning to like Katianna, and though she pretended to be harsh and mean, she really liked Viktor, too.

"Here," she said, handing him a crust of bread, "this will tide ye over. Now, let me see the nails on your hands." She reached for her knife and went toward him.

“Nay!” he screamed, and dove under the table. A large hairy boar’s head fell off the table and fell right beside him on the floor. The dead boar’s eyes stared right at him, and Viktor screamed again and scrambled out from underneath the table and into the apron of Katianna.

“What ye be screamin’ for, lad?” Katianna asked. “I ain’t gonna hurt ye none. I aim to clean out yer fingernails is all.”

He looked at her sideways. His fingernails? Why on earth would anyone care if his fingernails were clean or not? And where was that scary hairy boar that had terrified him and what was it doing in the kitchen?

“Is it dead?” he asked.

“Is what dead?” Katianna asked.

“The boar. Is it dead? I don’t want it to eat me the way it ate me father’s leg!”

“Shhhh, hush now child,” the woman said, gathering him into her arms. “That boar is quite dead. Shhhh. Let me see your fingernails now, and we will finish our story. The Duke likes his boys clean at his feasting table,” she said.

“Now, sit still here on me lap and let me have a look at ye. Ye want to hear the rest of the story don’t ye?”

The boy nodded. He was shaking, but he did very much want to hear the rest of the story.

Katianna plopped him on her lap and began to tell him more about the Duke’s family.

“Now, listen to me closely. Several generations later, in the year 859 AD, another Prince was born into the Premysl family named Borivaj I. And at the same time in the land of Serbia, the prince Slavibor’s wife had a beautiful little daughter

named Ludmila. And even though they were 450 miles apart, when Ludmilla was a very young girl, she came to live in the kingdom of Bohemia for she was promised to prince Borivaj. When they were 14 years old they were married in the year 873.”

“Soon they were the proud parents of a boy named Vratislav. And Vratislav is the father of Duke Wenceslas.”

“At about this time two men named Cyril and Methodius, who spoke our language, came to tell the Duke and Duchess about the King Jesus, the One True God. They made our first alphabet, and that is why it is called Cyrillic – after St. Cyril.² They wrote the gospels in our language and the Duke and Duchess learned about the good King Jesus, and began to pray to Him instead of idols and other gods and goddesses. They wanted everyone in the kingdom to pray to King Jesus, too.”

“King Jesus? Who is He?”

“He is a good King who loves us all.”

“I would like to meet this King!” Viktor said eagerly.

“You will,” the woman smiled. “If Duke Wenceslas has anything to do with it!”

“Anyway,” Katianna said, carving Viktor’s nails into a smooth arc. “The pagans did not like worshipping only this King Jesus. They liked being able to worship many gods and goddesses and being able to do magic and marry more than one wife. They caused much trouble for the Christian Duke and Duchess and for anyone who loved King Jesus.

² It is interesting to note that many civilizations developed written language after a missionary desired for the people to read God’s Word.

“When Vratislav was 14, he married a pagan princess named Drahmoria. Drahmoria refused to pray only to Jesus, and instead preferred to pray to her idols and all the gods and goddesses of the old days. She gave birth to two fine boys – our good Duke Wenceslas and his brother, Boleslav.”

“Now, Princess Ludmilla loved her grandsons, and she wanted them to learn about King Jesus. But Drahmoria wanted her sons to pray to the pagan gods and goddesses and them only. This worried the Princess Ludmilla, so she took Wenceslas away from her and raised him in the castle with her. There she had her priest, Paul, help him learn the holy scriptures.”

The lad looked at his mother. “The Duke must have missed his mother very much,” he said sadly.

“Perhaps,” the lady said. “But he loved his grandmother very much, too, and she gave him an excellent education. He learned to read. He practiced his letters by writing in wax, and he even learned Latin, the language of the Romans. He gave his whole life to learning about serving the new God, Jesus Christ. But his brother did not. To this day his brother hates the Duke and will not pray to Jesus.” She clicked her tongue and shook her head sadly.

“But why? Why does his brother hate him if he is so good?”

“Just because you are good,” she said, “doesn’t mean people will like you. They didn’t like the King Jesus, either, and even killed Him in the end.”

The lad nodded. Even in his young life, He had seen many people die. Children saw many ugly things during the Middle

Ages, so it came as no surprise to him that the King Jesus and the Duke had enemies, too.

“Duke Wenceslas’ father died when he was only 13 years old,” the woman said. Viktor interrupted her.

“Aye?! As my father has died?! The poor Duke! He lost both his mother and his father, too?”

“Aye, yes,” the woman said. “So his grandmother had a very strong influence on him and they had a very close relationship. He loved his grandmother very much, and she taught him everything she could about being kind and serving King Jesus. But alas, his mother was evil, and she hated his grandmother. So she ordered the government to kill Wenceslas’ grandmother, the dear Duchess Ludmilla, so she could be on the throne until the Duke was eighteen years of age.”

“Nay!” he cried.

“Aye, it were bitter days then. But when Duke Wenceslas became the Duke in charge, he built church buildings for the One True God. He is a brilliant architect and builder. No one has ever seen buildings of such advanced design. The rotunda of St. Vitus, right here at the castle, is the most remarkable building anyone has seen. I will have Tatianna show you later.”

The woman just kept working on Viktor’s nails. Viktor could not stop staring at the round face as it spoke of such amazing things.

“He also built the church of St. George, and had his grandmother’s body moved and buried there.³ And he wrote the first book ever written in our own language about his

³ Princess Ludmilla is still buried at St. George’s Basilica in Prague.

grandmother.”

“I have heard of books. I would like to see one,” the lad said.

“If you are here long, the Duke will see to it that you see a book or two,” she chuckled.

“Aye,” one of the youngest girls said.

“Tell him about the miracles that happen at the Duchess Ludmilla’s grave,” one of the younger girls whispered.

“Aye, ‘tis true,” an old, wrinkled woman clucked. She was plucking a big black bird whose dark feathers flew to the floor and in her lap. They were even sticking to the wrinkles on her face.

“Well, I have heard,” Katianna said, “that people are healed at her grave, and that a sweet scent comes forth from it.”

The boy’s eyes were large. He looked at his mother and she was sitting as still as he was, with wide eyes, listening to the story. She loved stories, too.

“In yer travels, do ye remember seeing a huge old oak tree beside our border castle?” the woman asked, her arms around his waist.

The boy nodded. “Aye.”

“Well, they say that the Duke’s grandmother, Ludmilla, planted that tree after he was born, and that the nannies of Duke Wenceslas used his bathwater to water it. That is why it is so tall and still stands there today.”⁴

⁴ The fabled oak tree still stands in the grounds of what was once a border castle, Stochov, where according to legend, Duke Wenceslas was born.

“Ayyyyyye,” the boy said. He had often admired that tree and had even hidden up in its branches when running from slave traders.

“As Wenceslas grew up, he also attended a Latin school in Budec. He prayed and worshipped God. He loved God so much that he had even thought of being a priest himself. He considered giving the kingdom of Bohemia to his brother. But his brother is a pagan, and the Duke wants to tell as many people about King Jesus as he can. His grandmother had taught him that a ruler has great influence on the people he rules.”

“He has always been a hard worker,” one of the littler girls said. “He likes to help in the vineyards and at threshing time so he can help prepare the fruits of the harvest for Holy Communion.”

“Yes. And the very priests that the Duke’s mother tormented and tortured – the Duke now uses as his advisors,” the woman with black feathers on her face said.

“He is a goodly Duke,” said Katianna, still working on his nails. “He provides shelter to orphans, buys children from slavery, and is always giving to the poor. Once, when the Duke Radslav wanted to go to war, the Duke instead challenged him to a duel, just to save lives.”

“And no matter what time of the day or night, if word is brought to him that any of his subjects is ill or in need, he sends help at once,” a little girl said, handing him a small cup of milk.

“Just like he sent help for us,” the boy said to his mother. “Aye, what a good man he be.”

“Aye,” they all said.

“We, all of us here in this room, were once on that slave

block. And the Duke bought us all.”

All the women and children nodded. No wonder they all enjoyed their work so much. It was easy to work hard for a master that you loved.

Young Viktor could not believe his eyes. He was escorted by Katianna, into a long hall full of people laughing and singing, where the Duke sat at the middle of a heavy long table so full of food, that Viktor strained to see it all at once. His eyes wandered up and down the table that stretched from one end of the room to the other, and he wondered how there could ever be so much food in one place.

“Welcome, welcome!” the good Duke Wenceslas said, motioning for the lad to sit beside him. “Come, sit with me at my table, young man. You and your mother, come, sit here beside me.”

Everyone in the room stopped talking and looked at the young man and his beautiful young mother. It was no secret to anyone that the Duke often rescued orphans and the poor. But to have them sit at a table fit for a king? What kind of nonsense was this? Duke Wenceslas’ brother rolled his eyes and the women standing with him looked scornfully at Viktor’s mother, Ivana. Thankfully, she did not notice. Her eyes were on the Duke and the roasted boar’s head sitting in front of him with an apple in its mouth.

“Come, come. Let us all join in a prayer of thanksgiving to our King for this bounty,” the Duke said, motioning for everyone to take their seats.



"You are the *Duke*?" Viktor gasped. It was the same man who had bought him from the slave trader!

The Duke laughed merrily. "Yes, my son, it is I! Duke Wenceslas. And I do not eat children and their mothers." He laughed again. "Are ye not hungry? Come here lad, and sit!"

"I'm starving!" Viktor said. "Can we eat now?"

"In good time. First, we must give thanks to the King of Kings for our bounty."

"The King Jesus?" Viktor whispered to the Duke.

"Yes!" he said. "Do you know Him?"

"No, not yet," Viktor said. "But I would like to."

"Very well," the Duke said. "I shall introduce you to Him very soon."

"Let us pray!" the Duke said, and motioned for an old priest sitting near him to begin the prayer of thanks.

Then, food was passed and tossed and eaten with fingers, for in those days, it was the mannerly way to dine. Viktor ate until he felt as if he had swallowed a large bag of stones. He had never been so full in all of his life.

"And now," the Duke said. "Let us, on this St. Stephen's Day, tell the story of the good martyr Stephen, who gave his life as a martyr for Christ. In honor of his bravery, we share our bounty with the poor. It is in his memory I have invited young Viktor, and his mother, Ivana to our table."

Viktor's mother blushed and looked down at her hands, but Viktor beamed and smiled brightly as the Duke began to tell about the Saint Stephen. He told how Stephen died telling others how to give their hearts to Jesus, who died on a Roman cross for all their sins. Viktor admired Stephen's courage but

he could hardly wait to learn how to give his heart to Jesus, too, and he wanted to learn more about Him.

"Even now," the Duke said. "There are those right here in the great land of Bohemia, that would like to see the Christians conquered and stoned as Stephen was. But thanks to my dear Grandmother, Ludmilla, one day, all of Bohemia shall be Christian."

Everyone except for the Duke's brother, Boleslav, raised a glass to the Duke. Boleslav did not want a Christian Duke to rule Bohemia, and he and his mother wanted him out of the way.

After much laughter and singing, the Duke walked Viktor to his sleeping quarters. They stopped to look out of a window and admire the moon shining crisp and clear on the sparkling winter snow. It was a bitter cold night, and the Duke was troubled to see a peasant in rags collecting twigs to make a fire.

"Do you know that man, Viktor?"

"Aye, I do," Viktor said. "He has three wee babes and a wife who has been ill. There is no one to care for the lot of them."

"Where does he live?"

"A long way hence, Sire, by the St. Agnes Fountain in a little cave of a house."

The Duke took Viktor by the shoulders and said, "Go back to the hall, gather up as much food as you can, along with plenty of pine logs. We will take these to him and his brood. Go on now."

Viktor did exactly as he was told, and with his mother's help, took all that they could carry back to the Duke. The Duke

strapped much of it onto his own back, and helped Viktor attach the rest of it to his.

“Let’s go lad. It is St. Stephen’s Day!”

Viktor was tired and he didn’t want to go back out into the cold, but how could he not do this kind Duke’s bidding? The Duke had done ever so much for him. He followed him out into the bitter night.

They hiked for a very long time, and Viktor could no longer feel his toes they were so cold. He felt faint and wanted to stop and sleep.

“Good Sire,” he gasped. “I can’t go on. It is so dark and cold and I am so weak.”

The Duke turned to the lad and touched him on the shoulder.

“Step in my footprints, Viktor, and they will warm ye. We are almost there.”

Viktor walked in the footsteps of his Duke. And somehow, he was indeed warmed by them. How could he know, tromping through the snow on that cold wintry night, that nearly a thousand years later, a man named John Neale would write a poem about him⁵ and the good Duke Wenceslas. It was set to the music of “Tempus Adest Floridum,” a 13th Century spring carol first published in the Swedish *Piae Cantiones* in 1582. From the time of its beginning, Christians around the world would sing this song at Christmastime.

Irony surrounds this hymn we sing each Christmas. First, it was written to the tune of a *spring* song, and it is not

⁵ Viktor is a fictitious character.

a Christmas carol at all, but a St. Stephen’s day song! And secondly, King Wenceslas was not really a king; he was a Duke. But he imitated his King Jesus by caring for the poor, building shelter for widows and orphans, and through helping others in need. Today, a statue of him on his horse stands at Wenceslas Square in Prague. Some people in Czechoslovakia believe that St. Wenceslas will return on a white horse and bring his people everlasting peace.

Paganism and Christianity have been mixing in the Slavic⁶ lands for centuries. It is intriguing that the return of Christ and the “return” of the Good King Wenceslas are described so similarly!

Good King Wenceslas

Words by John Neale, 1853

To the tune of “Tempus Adest Floridum”

*“Good King Wenceslas looked out on the Feast of Stephen,
When the snow lay round about, deep and crisp and even.
Brightly shone the moon that night, though the frost was cruel,
When a poor man came in sight, gathering winter fuel.*

*“Hither, page, and stand by me, if you know it, telling,
Yonder peasant, who is he? Where and what his dwelling?”
“Sire, he lives a good league hence, underneath the mountain,
Right against the forest fence, by Saint Agnes’ fountain.”*

⁶ It is interesting to note that the word “slave” actually comes from this word. Slave trade of Slavic peoples – mostly women and children -- thrived during Wenceslas’ time.

*"Bring me food and bring me wine, bring me pine logs hither,
You and I will see him dine, when we bear them thither."*

*Page and monarch, forth they went, forth they went together,
Through the cold wind's wild lament and the bitter weather.*

*"Sire, the night is darker now, and the wind blows stronger,
Fails my heart, I know not how; I can go no longer."*

*"Mark my footsteps, my good page, tread now in them boldly,
You shall find the winter's rage freeze your blood less coldly."*

*In his master's steps he trod, where the snow lay dinted;
Heat was in the very sod which the saint had printed.
Therefore, Christian men, be sure, wealth or rank possessing,
You who now will bless the poor shall yourselves find blessing."*

Epilogue

The life of Wenceslas came to an abrupt and tragic end. When the Duke was just 28 years old, his brother Boleslav tricked him into going to church for prayers and had him murdered in front of the door of the church of Sts. Cosmas and Damian. His statues and the story of his life and death are still displayed there.

About the author:

Karla Akins has over twenty-five years of combined experience as a homeschool educator, pastor's wife, author, singer, pianist, composer and speaker. Her two oldest children have graduated from their family's homeschool program and are now married with children. Karla loves being a grandmother! She resides in North Manchester, Indiana with her husband, Eddie, and their three youngest sons. Her hobbies include Bible study, blogging, and reading. Karla has a tender heart toward animals, and especially enjoys her three dogs: Oskar, a lazy Dachshund; Frankie, a comical Pug; and Gretchen a very friendly, happy Rottweiler.



*For Nicole and Brady, who have rekindled my love for learning
and have sparked in me a fascination for history.*

Authors note:

The town of Mainz was located in what is now the country of Germany. Strasburg is situated in modern day France. Then, both towns were simply a part of the Holy Roman Empire. Often these areas were known as the Germanic Kingdom or the Rhineland. Johann (also spelled Johannes) Gutenberg lived during the latter years of the medieval time period. This was a time of great political unrest, marauding invaders and colossal discord amidst the church leadership. Gutenberg's lifetime follows on the heels of the Great Schism and in many ways his personal life was affected by the political and religious upheaval of his times. Many records of Gutenberg's life have been lost through violence and destruction over the last 550 years. Some of the town records of Mainz were burned during the sack that occurred toward the end of his life, others during the reign of Napoleon and still others during the rule of Hitler and the 3rd Reich. Historians have done their best to piece together the details of his life through the court documents that have survived these disastrous episodes during the turbulent history of Germany.

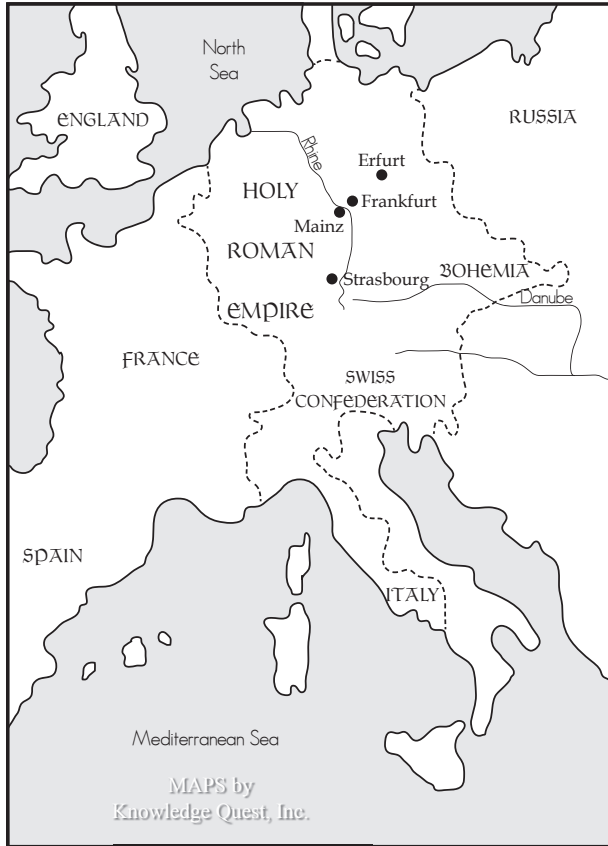


JOHANN GUTENBERG

And the First Printed Book

by Terri Johnson





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JOHANN GUTENBERG

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atching his step instinctively, Johann made his way along the docks which divided the walled town from the great river. This town of Mainz was not a large city even by medieval standards, but it was a busy town nonetheless and a major center for trade along the Rhine River. Johann enjoyed watching the fishermen tossing their catch to the fishmongers and the merchants haggling over the prices for their much needed supplies from the river men.

Johann stepped around the bolts of woolen cloth and stacks of sawn boards with youthful ease and moved past the money changers towards the town square. There was an unusual buzz in the narrow streets as the townspeople talked in raised voices and ran quickly past him. Something strange was afoot, but he could not interpret the cause of the commotion.

Clutching his school book more tightly to his chest, heart pounding within, he ran the rest of the way to the town mint where he hoped he would find his father. As he approached the shop, he noticed that the craft workers were not busy punching coins as they should, but instead were excitedly talking amongst themselves.

“Where’s my father?” Johann called with a nervous shout. The men stopped talking and all eyes turned toward the frantic boy.

“Johann,” the master craftsman came forward and said sternly, “Get out of here! This is no place for you today. I don’t know where your father is, but fortunately for him, he is not here.”

The boy quickly turned and raced for home. What was happening today? Where was his father? Although not a coin-maker himself, Johann’s father supervised the operations at the mint to assure that the making of the town’s money was done properly. This was an important responsibility he carried as a nobleman of the town. Why was he not there today?

As he approached his home on the corner of Christophstrasse and Schustergasse, he saw his mother leaning dangerously out the top floor window of the Gutenberghof, pulling in the wet clothes off the line. “Henne,” his mother called to him, “Schnell! Quick! Grab your things! We are leaving town! Schnell! Schnell!”

He joined the other members of his family as they quickly stuffed a few personal belongings into their travel sacks and hurried back down to the docks. The five of them boarded a boat sailing south to Eltville, their country home.

Settling onto the deck of the boat for the 7 ½ mile journey with his sack clasped loosely in his arms, Johann Gutenberg looked back at Mainz, the city of his birth, and wondered when he might return home again. How he would miss the Gutenberghof, his home, and his school chums at St. Viktor!

Eleven-year-old Johann listened as his father told him that earlier that day the craft workers from all the trades had stormed the town hall demanding that they operate their shops themselves. They no longer wanted to be supervised by the lords of Mainz. His father, Friele, had decided that it would be better to leave town while their tempers flared and the violence raged against the town noblemen. Besides, they were terribly outnumbered!

When emotions cooled and normality returned, so would they, his father assured him. His mother Else and his sister, also named Else, were looking forward to their time of retreat in Eltville. It was quieter there. His brother Friele also seemed glad for the adventure and change of scenery. Only Johann, the youngest, longed to remain in Mainz.

The year was 1411 when Johann and his family fled their home to live at their country estate in Eltville. They remained there for 3 years as the turmoil continued to boil between the craft workers and the noblemen of Mainz.

While in Eltville, Johann went to the community school at St. Peters. Here he continued to learn Latin and grammar and basic sums. Every day he would take to class his one and only school book entitled *The Donatus*. It was only a partial

book because he spent a portion of each day copying in his own hand the text that the school master read aloud. This was because there was only one book for the entire school. In those days, all books were hand copied. The students were required to use their best handwriting as someday another book might be copied from theirs.

Because books were so rare, they were also very precious and Johann cherished his school book even though it was merely a grammar text written in Latin. Someday he hoped he might own his very own copy of the Bible. His father had a beautiful heirloom Bible and it was treasured by the entire family.

In 1414, when the turmoil had died down, Johann's family cautiously returned to Mainz. Once again, Johann began to attend the school at St. Viktor, just outside the city walls. At 14, he was one of the oldest pupils at the school. Many of his chums had already left to attend University or help manage their family estates. In a couple of years, he would be old enough to attend University and he looked forward to that day with his whole heart.

That day finally arrived and Johann left home to attend the University in Erfurt. He continued his lessons in Latin and grammar, but he also studied logic, physics, astronomy, philosophy and debate. Although this university was located in the heart of the Holy Roman Empire, some of its teachings went against the teachings of the church. The schoolmasters encouraged their students to read and interpret the Bible for themselves instead of relying solely on the sermons of the church bishops. As a result, Johann Gutenberg would

often spend time in the monastery of St. Peter and watch the Benedictine monks hand-copy the Bible. He would read and absorb the open pages of the word of God, hiding them in his heart. He was fascinated by the beautiful script of the monks, but frustrated by the long and agonizing process. It could take months, sometimes more than a year, for one monk to finish one book. There had to be a better way.

In 1419, Johann's father died and he returned home to take care of his mother. He was now a young man, college educated and eager for whatever lay ahead. By this time both his older brother and his older sister had married. His brother Friele and his new wife had also recently moved into the Gutenberghof. As their family grew, Johann felt less and less comfortable living in his childhood home. It was time to move on and make a life for himself.

Once again, Johann packed his belongings, bade farewell to his family and left the town of his birth. The year was now 1429. Traveling on horseback, Johann rode past rolling vineyards and through dense forests to the town of Strasburg 100 miles to the southwest in what is now modern day France. It was then the fifth largest community in the German Kingdom. The pope himself visited Strasburg around this time and this is how he described the city, "With its many canals, Strasburg has a resemblance to Venice... The town has mansions for gentlemen which are fit for princes."

Johann took up residence at the monastery of St. Argobast a couple of miles outside the walled fortress of

Strasburg. Here he began to experiment in what he secretly called “the art and adventure.” He would work long hours into the night, melting down metals, hammering frames and boards into place, thankful for the quiet seclusion of this house at the monastery.

What was he up to? When he hired a goldsmith from town to help him determine the best mix of metals for his project, three gentlemen by the names of Hans Riffe, Andreas Heilmann and Andreas Dritzehn became curious about his mysterious activities. He wasn’t quite ready to share with them his most closely guarded secret, but he was willing to take them on as partners on a fund raising adventure he had recently learned about.

Every seven years the church in the nearby town of Aachen held a festival. This church believed that it had three holy relics in its possession – the swaddling clothes of the baby Jesus, the robes of his mother Mary, and the loincloth of the crucified Christ. It was believed that if one could just catch a glimpse of these sacred objects, he would be cured or immune from many diseases.

The priests would hold up the objects from a landing between the cathedral spires during the festival for the crowds below to view. The press of the masses became so great that on many days the city gates had to be closed. The church leaders decided that it was impractical for every person in the Holy Roman Empire to see these sacred objects personally, so they needed to think of a way for the travelers to take the holy and healing rays home to their loved-ones. The solution was mirrors. Mirrors were a new invention of the time and

the people were led to believe that if they held the mirrors in the direction of the holy relics, they could catch their healing powers. Once captured and transported safely home, whoever looked upon the mirror that glimpsed the sacred objects would absorb the healing rays.

The goldsmiths of Aachen could not keep up with the demand for mirrors so they agreed that others could produce and sell mirrors for the Aachen festival held every 7 years. This is what Gutenberg and his partners agreed to do and they began to produce mirrors in his workshop. The festival was one year away and they set about making as many mirrors as possible in that amount of time.

They put all of their money toward the project knowing that soon their investment would pay off. They were excited to earn a great deal of money from the sale of their mirrors. Gutenberg was particularly eager for cash to put towards his other secret art – the invention he had not revealed to anyone. Then misfortune struck. Another bout of the plague struck the area and the festival was postponed for a year. Their enormous profits would have to wait for an entire year and they had sunk all of their money into this venture.

Gutenberg had to think fast. Fearing that the partnership might dissolve, he decided to let them in on his most secret invention. But first, they had to agree not to tell a soul and they had to sign a contract stating that if any one of them should die before the invention was completed, his share of the profits would be divided among the remaining partners, with the exception of 100 gulden which would go to his next of kin. Each one agreed and the contracts were written up.

Johann Gutenberg began to tell them about his dream of making books faster and cheaper. He conceived of an idea of making letters, which he called type, that could be arranged and rearranged to make words. The words could be placed together to form lines, even pages of type that could be printed on paper or vellum. These arranged pages could be proofed and printed multiple times to achieve many copies exactly alike. He explained to them that he didn't have all of the details worked out, but that he had lots of ideas he was working on and that he welcomed their time and resources on completing his invention.

Wow! The partners were exhilarated! They immediately threw their energies into this new project. Gutenberg taught them everything that he knew so far about melting down metals, making forms, mixing dyes. They set up a working press at Dritzehn's house in town, while the metal letters were cast at Gutenberg's home at St. Argobast. He did not want to set up the entire printing operation in one place for fear of casual onlookers catching on to his idea.

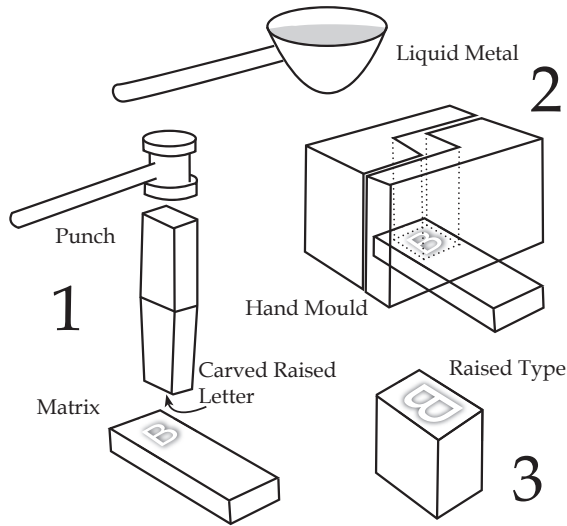
Once again misfortune struck. On Christmas Eve, Andreas Dritzehn became ill from the plague and died during the night. Gutenberg grieved for his friend. He also worried about the printing press. He sent his servant to Dritzehn's home to take apart the press so that no one could tell what they were using it for. Shortly after his death, Andreas's brother George came across the contract written up by Gutenberg and his partners and noticed something strange. Andreas Dritzehn had forgotten to sign the contract!

George Dritzehn immediately demanded that he take his brother's place in the partnership or he would take Gutenberg to court. Gutenberg refused, went to trial and triumphantly won the case. Unfortunately this legal fiasco lasted nearly a year and the remaining partners grew impatient and lost interest in the invention of movable type. The partnership dissolved and the other two men went off to sell mirrors at the Aachen festival. Meanwhile, Gutenberg began to develop the most crucial part of his invention.

It was called the hand-mould and this small hand-held apparatus became the crux of his amazing invention. Recalling his childhood when he would watch the punch cutters at the mint, he had already decided he needed punches engraved with the shapes of letters. These had to be carved out of hard steel to maintain sharp details when punched or pressed onto a surface. But the trouble was getting those punches small enough and lined up to make easily readable words. A typical page needed some 3500 characters and that was a lot of engraving to do! What he needed was a way to make multiple pieces of type from one set of punches. The hand-mould solved his dilemma.

Gutenberg found that a letter, such as "t" could be carved out of the end of a bar of steel. That "t" would then be placed on a softer metal, such as copper or brass, and "punched" or struck with a hammer to make an impression. This impression, called a matrix, would next be placed into the bottom of an adjustable hand-mould. If the letter was narrow, like "i" or "l", then the sides of the mould would be brought closer together. If the letter was wide, like an "m" or a "w", the sides would be pushed further apart. Finally, a mixture of melted lead, tin

The process from punch to type



and antimony would be poured into the mould. It would cool immediately, be released from the mould and a piece of type was cast. Many pieces of type would be made from this same impression, or matrix, because a printer would need 131 “t’s” just to typeset these two pages alone.

The other all important aspect to Gutenberg’s invention of printing was the press. These small newly created pieces of type needed to be arranged into a form and pressed onto a page. After many trials and errors, he had succeeded in constructing a printing press that would evenly press the letters onto a page.

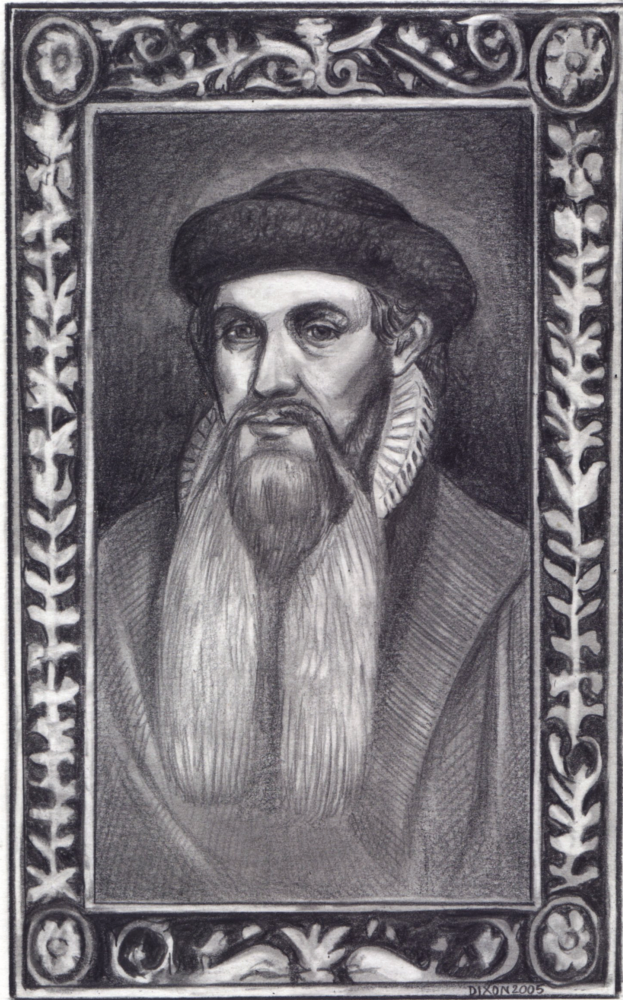
His ink mixture was finally the right consistency and he was ready at last to print a real page from a book for a test run. He chose a page from a popular work entitled, *The Last Judgment*.

After hours of work in setting up the page and years of sweat and hard work bringing him to this point in time, Johann Gutenberg printed his first page. It worked! It could use some improvements, but it worked!

Johann was energized to get underway on printing something, anything, when he heard a commotion outside. Gutenberg had been so consumed with his invention of printing that he had been unaware of the political unrest in Strasburg. The city officials were calling all men into service to protect Strasburg from an attack by a marauding band of soldiers roaming the countryside.

Johann may have felt vulnerable in that he lived outside the city gates or he may have not felt strongly enough for a city that he did not consider home. In any case, he once again packed up – this time with as much type and equipment as he could possibly carry – and he moved back to the golden city of Mainz on the Rhine.

It didn’t take him long to get back to work and set up shop. While doing so, a banker named John Fust became intrigued by all of the curious activities at the Gutenberghof. Gutenberg let him in on his secret and Fust became so enthused that he offered to loan him 800 gulden to set up a large printing shop at the Humberckhof just down the street. Excited by the prospect of a larger shop, more equipment and a staff to train in



the fine art of printing, Johann jumped at the offer and agreed to pay him back in full with interest. He even agreed to give him all of the printing equipment if he should fail to repay the loan.

Six printing presses were built and installed at the Humbreckhof, a staff of 20 plus workers were hired and trained, and a new, smaller typeface was designed and engraved. The brand new printing works at the Humbreckhof was now ready for its first major job. Gutenberg and Fust decided that they should start by printing the best selling book of all time – the Bible.

Before long, work was under way. The beautiful new Bible was set up in two columns and 42 lines. Each page required about 2800 pieces of type. The Bible upon completion would have nearly 1200 pages and its first edition would consist of 200 printed copies. They knew they would have many long months of hard work ahead of them. The task was enormous, but under the direction and vision of Johann Gutenberg, the Bible began to take shape and the printers were becoming experts in their new art.

Johann took on a special apprentice by the name of Peter Schöffer. To Schöffer, Gutenberg imparted not only his expertise skill in developing fine print, but also his standards for perfection. He passed on to him his vision for the printed book to not only be cheaper and faster than its hand-copied counterpart but for print to become even more eye-catching than script. Hand scripted books in that day had beautiful large lettering at the beginning of each paragraph called illumination, each one in itself a work of art. Manuscripts were also of more than one color – often three. Gorgeous borders and pictures

were frequently drawn down the sides. Gutenberg wanted his Bible to match or surpass in loveliness the handwritten works of art that currently resided on medieval book shelves.

Schöffer soon became a master printer. Together, he and Gutenberg created what most people consider the finest book ever printed. Today it is known as the 42-line Gutenberg Bible. When the work was nearly completed, John Fust became impatient with the entire process and demanded that Gutenberg immediately repay his loan in full. Gutenberg was unable to do so because all of his money was tied up in the printing of the Bible. He asked Fust for a few months time to bind the books and get them ready for sale. But Fust refused and hauled him into court.

Historians wonder if John Fust was simply impatient, or if perhaps he was truly mean spirited and money hungry. For he did indeed win the law suit and Gutenberg had to turn over all of the equipment and unfinished Bibles to Fust. Fust promoted Schöffer to master of the Humberck Printing Works and they completed the Bible without Gutenberg. Every copy was sold and with the proceeds they were able to begin setting up for the next printed book – a church hymnal.

Gutenberg was devastated. His life work was practically stolen from him by his trusted financial partner. He was in his mid-fifties by this time and he nearly did not have the heart to start over again. But Johann Gutenberg was not a man to give up easily.

Johann once again set up shop at the Gutenberghof and

in those tiny quarters with his single printing press, he began to print books once again. In his later years he produced many documents and books, even collaborated on another edition of the Bible.

Just when his life was becoming rather routine and predictable, an alarming event occurred. Enemy troops stormed the city of Mainz, overthrew the government and exiled many of the inhabitants. The city folks were corralled in the town square and herded out through the city gates with only what they could carry on their backs.

Dazed and overwhelmed, Johann Gutenberg headed for the country estate in Eltville. Relatives were living in the house, but they cheerfully provided him with a room. Under his guidance and direction, a print shop was opened in Eltville. In fact, printing houses were springing up all over Europe, like a ripple in a pond, as the original printers whom Gutenberg trained were exiled from Mainz and spreading out across the countryside. A printing revolution had been born. Within 40 years, there would be over 500 print shops in operation in Europe and more than one million books printed. Gutenberg had indeed changed the world of book making. He has been credited with one of the most revolutionary inventions of all time.

And so what happened to Johann Gutenberg? After his exile from his hometown, the archbishop heard of his plight and wanted to restore him to favor for his remarkable invention. He bestowed on him the honor of knighthood and provided him with a home in Mainz not far from the Gutenberghof after the city had been restored to peace. Gutenberg traveled back and

forth between Eltville and Mainz overseeing the printing works which operated in those cities, but he never again ran the shops himself. He was getting older in years and needed to slow down. One day, while at his house in Mainz, Gutenberg walked past the newly reopened print shop at Humbreckhof and spoke with Peter Schöffer. He learned from him that John Fust had died of the plague during his travels in Italy. Gutenberg grieved over this news because he knew that if it weren't for Fust the Gutenberg Bible never would have come into being. He continued to walk and found himself at the docks. Large ships and towering cranes dominated the landscape. So much had changed since he was a boy. He saw a book seller loading a crate of printed books onto the dock for shipment to Frankfurt. As he passed by, several people nodded to Gutenberg and tipped their hats to him. He was now an honored citizen and a knighted lord. For a brief moment, time seemed to stand still. The bright autumn sunshine glinted off the Rhine River and a sense of peace and accomplishment washed over him. He thanked the Lord for his long and full life as he turned for home.

Epilogue

Johann Gutenberg died at the age of 68. A clerk at the town hall recorded these words in the city records book, "In the year of our Lord 1468 on St. Blasius' Day died the honored master [Johann Gutenberg] on whom God have mercy." As he was honored then, so we honor him today - for this man changed the world as we know it today. His determination to

print the first book has given mankind the gift of easily sharing knowledge and information with one another. Printed books have brought delight to their readers every day for over 500 years. His gift will not quickly be forgotten.

About the Author:

Terri Johnson is the creator of Knowledge Quest maps and timelines (www.knowledgequestmaps.com). Her mission for the company is to help make the teaching and learning of history and geography enjoyable for both teacher and students. She has created and published over 15 map and timeline products. Her *Blackline Maps of World History* have been widely recommended in the education community and published in *The Story of the World* history series by Susan Wise Bauer. Terri and Knowledge Quest recently won the "Excellence in Education" award granted by The Old Schoolhouse magazine for best geography company of 2003 and 2004. Terri resides in Gresham, Oregon with her husband Todd and their four children whom she teaches at home. She is expecting baby number five any day now...



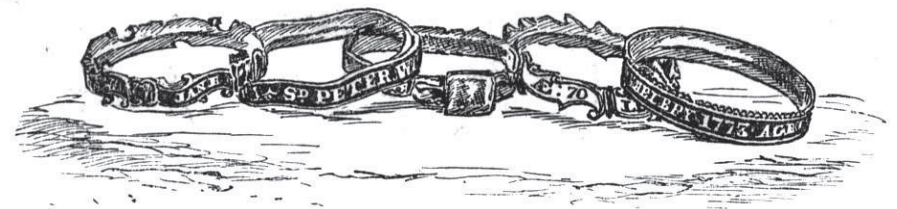
To my mother for her courage, love and perseverance, raising five children from a wheelchair in spite of pain, illness, and discouragement, persevering through the greatest storms and the worst hardships to be there for us, encouraging us to do what we loved and pursue our dreams, and helping us all along the way, sharing in our joys and sorrows. And for her compassion and love toward anyone suffering or in need, and her courage in standing up for the rights of those who face unjust prejudices and bigotry.

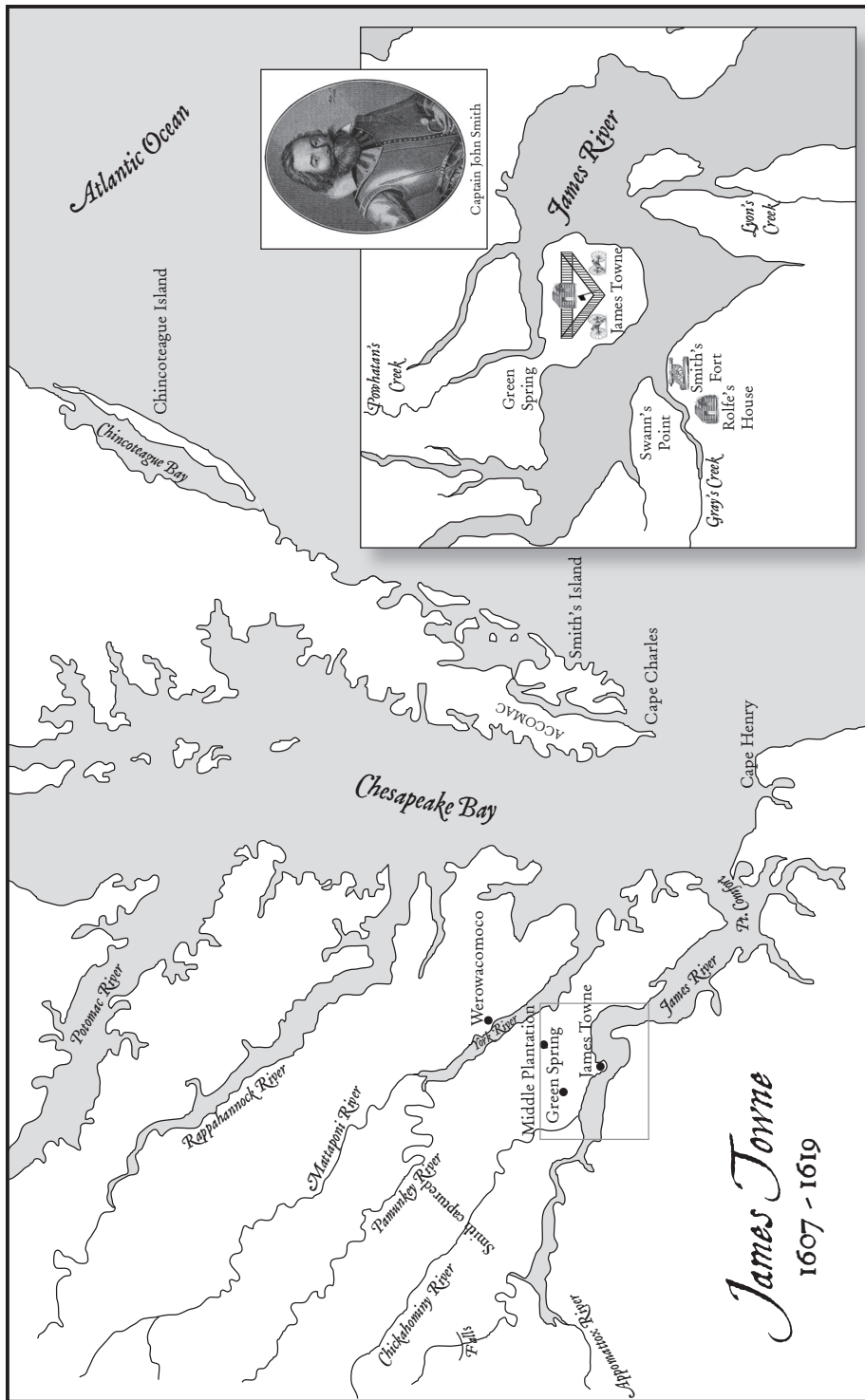
P
Pocahontas

Maiden of Peace

1595 - 1617

by Jennaya Dunlap





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I Pocahontas

Maiden of Peace

by Jennaya Dunlap

1607, Werowocomoco, Virginia

The crowds inside the longhouse pressed close together, whispering with great excitement. The heat in the dark room grew stifling from the mass of people, but Pocahontas was used to it—such was always the case during occasions of great significance.

She stood straight and poised by her mother's side, her pale deerskin dress decorated with painted shells and a blue fringe across the front. Her father, Powhatan, the great chief of the Algonquin tribe of the same name, was stretched out in regal repose on a seat of furs, his uplifted gaze roaming the room. His numerous wives were gathered around him, his favorites seated close by, while the others were clustered farther away.

“Bring the prisoner in,” Powhatan commanded, raising one arm toward the wide doorway. Immediately the crowds stepped back toward

the walls, clearing a path across the room.

A group of young braves near Pocahontas whooped, keeping up a steady drumbeat. Two strong men, experienced in war and armed with tomahawks, appeared in the doorway with a man such as Pocahontas had never seen before grasped between them. His skin was white, like her frock, and his eyes, lighted by the sun outside, were as blue as the waters of the Great River. His hair was pale too and he was covered in heavy-looking garments.

At his entrance a wild, warlike shout went up through the room. The white man was led toward Powhatan's throne of furs. His step was calm, but when he passed Pocahontas his eyes met hers for a moment and she saw fear in them. And for good reason. She shuddered, knowing all too well what would probably happen tonight.

Powhatan's favorite wife presented the prisoner with a bowl of water and a bunch of feathers to wash and dry his hands. Powhatan motioned for him to sit down, and all around him the men sat cross-legged on the bare ground. The women brought in food—turkey and smoked deer meat with vegetables.

The men ate in silence, their portions no bigger than those of the white man. When the meal was finished, the braves pulled the prisoner to his feet and turned him to face Powhatan. The village spirit men crowded around him, their faces painted black and menacing.

An older man, an advisor from a nearby tribe, stepped forward, his eyes narrowed at the prisoner. "This man was trespassing on our land, taking our food without our permission. And when we tried to capture him, he shot two of our men with a magic bow."

The spirit men let out blood-curdling whoops. "Let him die!"

The white man stepped forward, his gaze meeting Powhatan's. "It is true that I killed two of his men. But they killed two or three of

my companions and tried to kill me, so the loss is equal on both sides. Please, good sir, spare my life—I have no wish to cause harm to your people."

The spirit men and advisors bent over Powhatan and spoke to him in low tones. Pocahontas held her breath, tension building inside her. When the men stepped aside, she scanned her father's face. With a sinking heart she could see what his decision was even before he spoke.

"The white man must die," he commanded, raising his eyes just once to look at the prisoner. The spirit men let out an eerie cry of triumph, while the drumming of the braves grew loud and ominous. Several strong men rolled in two big boulders, laying them to rest at the foot of Powhatan's throne.

Suddenly Pocahontas couldn't stand it any longer. She pushed her way through the crowd toward Powhatan. The other women stepped aside to make room for her to pass. Surely my father will listen to me, his favorite daughter!

She felt the glares of the spirit men as she came to his side, but she spoke in a clear voice. "Please, father—don't shed any more blood. This man came to our land because he was hungry, and he promises not to do any more harm."

A combination of amusement and hesitation showed on Powhatan's face, but before he could answer, one of the spirit men leapt forward with a shrill, angry shout.

"The War God demands the sacrifice of this man's life. If he is spared, the spirits will bring evil on us and demand more sacrifices from among our people." The sound of his voice sent shivers down Pocahontas' back.

Powhatan lifted his chin and raised his arm toward the braves in a gesture for them to continue. In a rush, they grabbed the white man and

forced his head against one of the boulders. Pocahontas fell back, not wanting to see what would follow and yet unable to turn away. Her heart leapt with adrenaline, and she shivered with tension.

The braves raised their clubs, ready to strike his head. “No!” With a cry, Pocahontas sprang forward and threw herself across the white man, covering his head with her own. She closed her eyes, waiting for the death that must surely come—listening to the shocked gasps of the women.

But nothing happened. The room settled into silence, and she heard her father’s voice. “Rise up, my daughter. The white man will live.”

Her heart still pounding, Pocahontas pulled herself to her feet. Trembling, she looked at her father, but his eyes held the amusement she had seen earlier, not the anger she was afraid of.

“My daughter has chosen for you to live,” Powhatan announced, rising to his feet. “Go in peace.” When Pocahontas turned toward the white man, he was smiling.

The next day, as she walked with him among the oval-shaped houses of Werowocomoco, she learned that his name was Captain John Smith. He was one of the leaders of a village up the river, a place called Jamestown.

“It was a brave thing that you did,” he continued. “Today your father is willing for our peoples to live together in peace. He has asked for gifts from Jamestown, and in return he has promised me my safety.”

Pocahontas nodded, remembering the talk she had had with her father the night before, pleading with him not to harm the white men. This morning he had called John Smith to a council in the longhouse and made the arrangements he had just mentioned.

He was lucky, she knew, for her father didn’t often heed her requests for mercy. When he was angry, his punishments were great and vindictive. Those who fell out of his favor often were beaten severely or put to death, in the way John Smith had nearly experienced.

John Smith had told her much of his life and the ways of the white men who had landed on the shores of the Great Sea. He had led a rebellious life, running away from home at the age of 16 to fight in Henry IV’s war against the Spaniards and later, against the Ottoman Empire. In 1602, he was captured and sold as a slave to the Turks, but later escaped.

Two years later, he joined the voyage to the New World to colonize Virginia. “I made trouble on the voyage,” he admitted, looking out across the river. “In fact, Captain Newport was going to have me executed upon our arrival, but they discovered my name in the sealed list of the new leaders, and my life was spared.”

“So last night was the second time,” Pocahontas turned to him with curiosity.

“Aye, the second time,” John Smith still had a faraway look in his eyes. “And now I must get back to my men before they think I really am dead.”

January, 1608

A few weeks later, Captain John Smith returned to Jamestown, rested and loaded with provisions. Powhatan sent several braves with him to collect the gifts he had promised, along with Pocahontas and one of her older brothers. Even before they reached the hastily-built wall of high wooden slabs that surrounded the town, several men, pale-skinned and well-dressed like John Smith, emerged from the gate and rushed toward them.

Pocahontas could see from their faces that something was wrong.

They shouted to John Smith as they approached, gesturing in agitated excitement. Pocahontas couldn't understand the language they spoke, but John Smith's guide translated many of their words into her native Algonquin tongue.

"Come quick—most of the men are leaving!" One of them pointed toward a ship looming at the water's edge. It was huge, unlike the simple canoes of Pocahontas' people, with numerous sails of pale canvas flapping in the wind. Men were carrying crates and bundles on board.

"Where? Back to England?" John Smith stood still, his brow knit with a heavy frown. "But it's the middle of winter!"

"They say they'd rather endure the voyage than continue to die of starvation here," another man replied. "They won't listen to reason—the council has tried everything." John Smith turned toward the coast, his steps hurried, and the others followed him.

"Five more died while you were away," said a heavy-set man with graying hair who had joined them. He had an air of authority about him. "Only thirty-eight are left of the original one hundred and five settlers, and our provisions are running out."

Pausing on the swampy ground that led down to the waters, John Smith took aside the man who had just spoken and they conferred in low tones. The ship had just begun to pull away from the shore when he straightened up and turned to give his command.

"William, get the men together and point one of the cannons toward the ship. Send someone out to give the mutineers this warning—if they don't turn back, the *Discovery* will be blown out of the water."

For several tense moments, Pocahontas was sure a battle would ensue, especially when she saw the angry glares of some of the men toward John Smith. But the three men on the boat he had sent to give

the warning returned with the news that they had decided to stay.

When the crisis was over, John Smith led the way toward the fort. "And now to show you the power of the big guns," he announced. Turning to one of the cannons facing outward from the walls, he ordered his men to load it and fire it at an old tree that was stiff and frozen with thick icicles.

Pocahontas braced for the sound of the cannon, but when it came, it was far louder than she had imagined. The braves fell to the ground, but she had been leaning against the wall and she only jumped.

"My father will be well-pleased," she told John Smith when she stopped shaking.

But when they surrounded the cannon to move it to their boats, they discovered it wouldn't budge. After several efforts, they had to give up, though Pocahontas knew her father would be unhappy. Instead, they filled the boat with the other gifts John Smith offered.

As Pocahontas returned to the fort, she heard angry voices once again. She reached the gates in time to see John Smith dragged between two men, toward one of the thatch-roofed wooden huts inside. A swarm of others gathered around, shouting in accusing tones.

"What is happening?" Pocahontas begged of the guide.

"He is being tried by the council—they accuse him of causing the deaths of the men who went with him on the expedition," the interpreter told her before hurrying to talk to some of the bystanders.

Pocahontas and her brothers pressed close, watching closely for further signs of what was happening. John Smith was no longer in sight—he had been brought inside the house and the door shut behind him. After what Pocahontas guessed by the sun's position was an hour, the interpreter reappeared with a grave look.

"They have sentenced him to be executed," he said simply. The

What *Really* Happened in Colonial Times

door opened behind him and John Smith was led out amid the chaos of the gathered men. Before Pocahontas could speak, he had passed, with little more than a desperate look in her direction.

A feeling of helpless horror passed over her. This was the third time he faced death—and this time she couldn't save him. She turned away as two men lowered a rope from the building, the noose ready.

Then a shout went up through the street, followed by the call of a horn. Pocahontas followed the colonists to the gate. She gasped in surprise—another great ship stood next to the one the colonists had tried to escape in. Painted on the black side were the words John and Francis.

Perhaps forty men disembarked, and one of them was greeted with the respect of a leader. Pocahontas overheard them calling him “Captain Newport.” As he approached the fort, John Smith hurried out to meet him, unharmed. Desperate to know what was going on, Pocahontas looked for the interpreter.

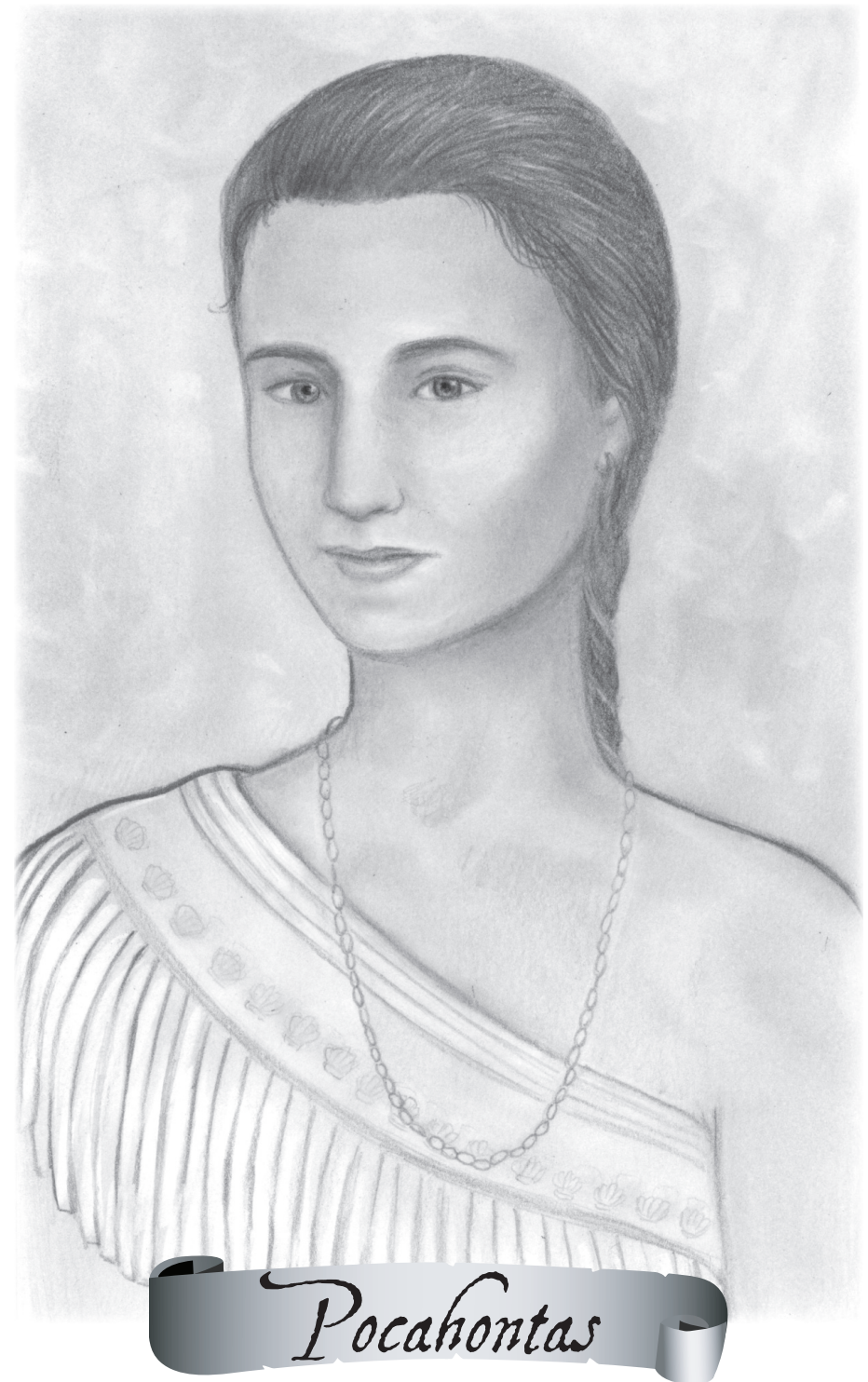
“Captain Newport has brought fresh men and many supplies,” he explained when she found him.

“But what of John Smith? What will they do with him?” Pocahontas asked.

“He is saved—Captain Newport overturned the order to execute him,” the interpreter answered.

That evening, a celebration was held onboard the John and Francis, and Pocahontas found that she and the other Indians who had come with her were guests of honor. The next day, she and the others returned home with their canoes well-loaded.

Because of the swampy ground and the colonists' disinterest in hard work and lack of farming knowledge, their crops had failed,



leaving them with little for the long, freezing winter that had taken hold. Knowing her new friends would starve without help, Pocahontas convinced her father to allow her and a group of women to bring food—corn, meat, and other supplies—to Jamestown every week or so.

She was shocked by her first trip back, for she found most of the settlement in a blackened, smoking rubble. Flames had burst out in the night a few weeks earlier, getting out of control before the colonists could stop the fire. Now even the remaining supplies from Captain Newport's ship were gone.

She found Captain Smith giving instructions to some of the men, his face grave. But when he saw Pocahontas and the food she had brought, he reacted with joy. The Jamestown colonists gave her royal treatment, urging her to stay overnight at the fort. The next day, she spent the afternoon playing with the English boys outside the fort walls. They ran and jumped, and Pocahontas showed them how to turn cartwheels on their hands.

In February that year, Captain Newport and Captain John Smith arrived on the shores beside Werowocomoco, their boats laden with valuable merchandise from England to trade in return for furs and food. Pocahontas and the other villagers watched in awe as the colonists carried an English bed—complete with blankets and what John Smith called a “mattress”—to the longhouse for Powhatan.

Powhatan refused it, reminding them that it wouldn't fit through the doorway of his hut. “We want guns and swords in exchange for our corn, not the strange luxuries of the white men.”

John Smith and Captain Newport put their heads together, talking rapidly in anxious tones. Pocahontas knew they were worried that Powhatan would use the weapons on the colony. Stepping forward, John Smith settled the matter by convincing Powhatan of the rarity and

value of the shiny, blue beads he had brought. After negotiations, her father agreed to the trade.

Thomas, one of the boys Pocahontas had met on her last trip to Jamestown, was with them this time. When Powhatan was introduced to him, he sat up on his throne of furs and called John Smith forward to make a proposal.

“Let this son of your people, Thomas, stay among us and learn the ways of my tribe,” he suggested, his chin raised in an imperial manner. “In return, Namontack, the son of my favorite wife, shall go to live in Jamestown and learn your language. Thus the two would know the ways of both peoples, and help to interpret better between us.”

Pocahontas turned to glance at John Smith's face—she could see that he liked the plan. He bowed in respect and signaled his approval. When the colonists' ship left for Jamestown, Pocahontas' half-brother stood on the deck, waving to her and her siblings. Behind her, Thomas stood on the shore, ready to take his place among her people.

Thomas and Namontack learned quickly, opening the way to bring mutual respect and good communication between the two peoples. But both sides had their own greed—the colonists for land and wealth, and Powhatan for power and weapons to control his enemies. The short-sighted goals of each group brought many clashes.

As summer approached, Powhatan, still angry that John Smith hadn't delivered the promised cannons and guns, sent seven braves to sneak into Jamestown by night and seize as many English swords as they could find. But they were spotted by the watchman and an alarm was raised. Within days, Namontack arrived in Werowocomoco to report that the men had been taken prisoner and were in the Jamestown guardhouse.

Pocahontas was surprised when her brother came to fetch

her, telling her Powhatan wanted to speak with her. After much consideration, he had decided to send her to Jamestown to negotiate for the men's release.

When she arrived at the fort, her friends greeted her warmly, as usual, but this time she went straight to John Smith to carry out her mission. She found him in one of the storehouses, directing some other men. He stepped outside with her, telling her he had just been elected the president of the Jamestown council.

Pocahontas was relieved to hear it—her job would be much easier with him in charge. After a long talk and some hesitation on John Smith's part, he finally agreed to release the prisoners, on the condition that they would promise to stay away from Jamestown.

The next day, Pocahontas was on her way home with the freed warriors. Her people greeted her with cheers, carrying her to the longhouse on their shoulders.

In part because of Pocahontas' influence, relations between the Virginia tribes and the colonists remained on good footing for a while. But, slowly, more and more white people arrived and began to build settlements. The bang of their shotguns in the woods where they hunted became a common sound. Land the Indians felt they had a right to was taken without payment.

Pocahontas sensed that her people were losing patience. She could feel their silent hostility growing, and she saw the darkening of her father's brow as he listened to reports of the colonists' success. But she could only wait and watch, continuing to live her life between two cultures, with deep ties to both.

As autumn came, with the rich gold and red hues of the trees, and the energetic preparations of the animals for the chill of winter, things

had gotten worse. Pocahontas had heard her father and other chiefs talk of going on the warpath, so she was surprised when she discovered that Powhatan had invited the white men up the river to camp near Werowocomoco for a few days. Something didn't seem right.

Leaving the night's meal of deer and fish to cook under the watchful eye of Alawa, one of her half-sisters, Pocahontas sprinted toward the longhouse. In the distance she could hear the voices of John Smith's men as they set up a shelter by the river. She paused outside the dark doorway, her heart pounding. Before she entered, however, she heard her father's voice, low and ominous.

"We'll wait until they've gone to sleep and are unguarded," Powhatan was saying. "Then you and several other warriors can sneak in and kill them."

"What if they suspect something?" It was the voice of her oldest half-brother.

"We must act friendly until the moment of the ambush," Powhatan replied. "Perhaps we can send Pocahontas and some other women to their camp with food."

Chills ran down Pocahontas' back, and she turned to run, trembling. So her father's plan was to kill them while they were most vulnerable. The sudden realization came that John Smith and her other friends would die tonight unless she did something to save them. But how? Certainly her father wouldn't change his mind. She thought quickly and decided what she must do.

When Alawa came with Powhatan's order for them to prepare the food for the visitors, she took her aside and gave her quick instructions. Before long, they were on their way to the finished wooden and canvas shelter where John Smith and his men were seated around a fire.

Pocahontas could see that her presence had the effect Powhatan

was hoping for—the men let down their guard, assuming all was well. Alawa did as she had requested, taking the other women with her to leave her alone with John Smith. Knowing she had only a few moments, she blurted out her warning, urging him to set up sentries to keep watch through the night.

It took a while to convince him, but when she did, John Smith responded with emotion, pouring out words of gratitude. “You have saved my life a second time. How can I repay you? If you stay, I can reward your kindness with gifts from the treasure we brought with us.”

Pocahontas shook her head. “I cannot stay—my father will be angry enough as it is.” She slipped away, tiptoeing in the darkness until she reached her tent, where she burrowed under the bearskin blanket beside Alawa. The danger was not over yet—she could feel tension in the air.

She woke the next morning to the whispered sound of Alawa’s voice beside her. In the half-light she could barely see the outline of her face, bent over her. “Are they—are the men safe?” Pocahontas held her breath, waiting for the answer.

“They kept their watch all night, and the warriors didn’t dare to attack,” Alawa replied softly. “But oh, Matoaka, our father suspects who did it, and his anger is great against you.” Indeed, from that day on, Powhatan was cold and distant toward her, hardly speaking to her.

1609

Pocahontas stood still on the shore of the river with one of her small half-brothers, barely older than a papoose, in her arms. The colonists’ boat was back, and already the messengers from Jamestown were on the shore. Her brothers hurried to meet them, their moccasin-

covered feet making little noise in the leaves.

The messengers stopped to talk to them, and even from a distance Pocahontas could see her brothers’ faces darken. With a sinking heart, Pocahontas handed the boy-child to one of the other women and ran toward them.

“What has happened?” she begged of her brothers as they passed her on trail, on their way back to the longhouse.

“The white captain, John Smith, was killed by one of their big guns,” one of her brothers turned to speak to her while the other hurried on. She could see in his eyes that he understood the fear and horror she felt at the news.

“No—it couldn’t be,” Pocahontas’ heart was heavy in her chest as she turned to the white men. “Is it really true?”

The men shuffled their feet, their guns hanging limply at their sides. They nodded, and a bearded man she had met once before at Jamestown stepped forward. “It was an accident with gunpowder. Terrible—we only heard of it last night.”

Shaken with horror and disbelief, Pocahontas turned and fled, past the gathered colonists and past the people of her village. The trees passed like blurs of brown and green, and the river to one side seemed to roar with a warning of trouble. She ran until the village was far behind, sinking to her knees beneath an old chestnut that hung over the rushing waters.

Today she couldn’t even see her reflection in the angry waters. She leaned back against the tree’s trunk, staring at the sky. Her heart ached, for she knew what would happen without John Smith to solve the quarrels and disputes between their people. War could not be long in coming—more bloodshed on both sides.

And she was right. Captain Ratcliffe, who replaced John Smith in the leadership of Jamestown, didn't make the same efforts to keep good relations between the colonists and the Powhatan Indians. Constant fighting broke out between them, with unreasonable demands and much violence from both sides.

Later that year, Captain Ratcliffe sailed upriver to Werowocomoco, as John Smith had done before, and found himself in an ambush. He was captured and tortured to death, and the last vestiges of the fragile peace were broken.

Pocahontas grew weary of the wailing war cries and nightly drumming of the braves and the spirit men, and the scalping and bloodshed nearly every day. Fear pounded inside her when she lay inside her tent with her sisters, hearing the bangs of the colonists' guns and the taking of prisoners. She was pained, too, by her father's unwillingness to communicate with her, and by his cold distance because of her friendship with the white people.

When he called her to the longhouse and sent her to travel with some others to a nearby tribe further up the Great Potomac River, she was relieved to go and leave the horrors of war behind for a time. They would be trading furs, corn, and tools made of copper.

Japazeus, the chief of the tribe, and Kanti, his beautiful young wife, welcomed Pocahontas into their home, happy to extend hospitality to the favorite daughter of the great Powhatan Chief. When they asked her to stay with them awhile, Pocahontas accepted gladly, because she was not eager to return to the scene of so much violence.

She was now about eighteen years old. As things grew worse between her people and the growing numbers of colonists settling in Virginia, she worried about her own family as well as those she had come to know and love in Jamestown. Reports from Jamestown were grave.

The winter of 1609 had brought disease and starvation, leaving only 60 survivors. They were on the point of abandoning the fort when supply ships arrived from England, along with a new governor.

One day, in spring of 1613, a great ship appeared on the shore of the Potomac tribe, with the huge banner of England waving in the wind. Japazeus greeted the white man who disembarked like a brother, and introduced him as his good friend, Captain Argall. There was something in his eyes that Pocahontas didn't like, though he seemed friendly enough.

With Japazeus to translate, she showered him with questions about her people and about her friends at Jamestown.

"Things are bad, very bad," the captain furrowed his brows as he spoke. "Neither side is willing to make peace." Then he looked at Pocahontas with a frown and asked some rapid questions to Japazeus in English. In the conversation that followed between them, she heard her own name used several times.

She gave Japazeus a puzzled look. "What is he saying about me?"

"He's just surprised to find you here," was all he would say, and quickly he led the captain to his spacious wigwam, where Kanti was preparing a meal of fish and corn.

A few days later, Pocahontas was seated cross-legged in her favorite low tree branch outside the wigwam, stringing shells she had gathered into a delicate necklace. Kanti told her Captain Argall was leaving and asked her to go with Japazeus and her to see him off at his ship.

Pocahontas slipped down from her perch and followed, glad to make her friend happy. When they reached the river, where the ship

loomed tall and strong, she stopped to stare at the sails as big as the whales her people used to hunt, fascinated. Kanti asked to go aboard, telling Pocahontas she was eager to see the inside of the ship.

“I’ll wait here—I’ve already seen inside some of the ships at Jamestown,” Pocahontas told her with a smile.

“If you don’t come, then I can’t go either,” Kanti protested with a glance at Japazeus. “I would be uncomfortable without another woman with me.” Pocahontas hesitated, uneasy this time.

“Please come with us—for Kanti’s sake,” Japazeus begged.

Pocahontas didn’t want to disappoint Kanti, so at last she assented to go aboard. Captain Argall looked relieved, and quickly ushered his guests onto the great ship. He led them into a long room, where a table was set with dishes that shined like silver.

“Be seated—I have a feast prepared for you,” he beamed, pulling out chairs for them. Pocahontas couldn’t help wondering how he had gotten the food ready so soon—and how he had known to have the table already set with four places. But she placed those thoughts behind her and enjoyed the deer meat, fruit and vegetables, and the bread made of corn.

By the time the meal was over, they had agreed to spend the night on Captain Argall’s ship and return to shore in the morning. The captain led Pocahontas through a narrow hall to a wide room lined with windows, where guns and cannons were lined up facing outward. He assured her that Japazeus and Kanti would be along soon—they only wanted to talk to him privately for a few minutes.

Pocahontas hunched in a corner and tried to stay awake, but she fell asleep before Japazeus and Kanti came. When she awoke, the gunroom was dark except for the bluish glow of dawn, and strangely silent. Something felt wrong—Pocahontas sat up in a sudden panic. A

quick glance around the room told her Japazeus and Kanti weren’t there.

Holding back the fear that swelled in her throat, she slipped out of the gunroom, and ran without a sound through the hall. Hearing voices on the deck, she opened the door leading there, and stood still, unnoticed by Captain Argall and her two friends. They were near the railing, and even in the predawn darkness she could see the silvery glint of a copper kettle the captain passed to Japazeus.

Pocahontas strained to hear what he said, and realized with surprise that he was speaking in her own tongue. “Thank you for help,” he told Japazeus and Kanti.

Anxious to leave the ship, Pocahontas made her presence known and rushed toward her friends. “I want to leave—right away. Please, take me back to the shore.” The startled expression on Japazeus’ face turned to a guilty look, alarming her even more. Pocahontas turned to Kanti and saw that her arms were full of gifts of copper and other metals.

“My adopted brother, Japazeus, and his wife may leave the ship, but you must stay,” Captain Argall stood behind her, blocking her from fleeing.

“Why? Where are you taking me?” Pocahontas turned frantically to call for Japazeus, but he and Kanti had disappeared. With a rush of fear and agony, she realized it had all been a plot—her friends had betrayed her!

“The other leaders and I have decided to keep you as a hostage, in hopes of convincing Powhatan to hand over the men he has taken prisoner.” Captain Argall was leading her away from the deck. “Don’t worry—I won’t hurt you. You’ll be released as soon as your father fulfills our demands.”

In moments, she found herself back in the gunroom. She fell to the ground, weeping, as the ship began to move. The shore grew distant,

and the trees became only specks at the river's edge. How could this be happening? Pocahontas watched from the window, her eyes blinded with tears.

When her first grief was over, she decided to make the best of her situation. If her capture would help to make peace between her people and the colonists, she told herself, then it would be worth it. Still, she couldn't help wondering how her father would react when he heard the news.

Her keen knowledge of the river helped her to get her bearings, and soon she realized they were on their way to Jamestown. The ship docked there, and Captain Argall sent a messenger to Werowocomoco with the news of her capture, along with his demand that Powhatan give up the prisoners and stolen goods.

Pocahontas waited anxiously for her father's response, but it was three months before he replied. Perhaps he didn't worry about what the colonists would do to her, she reasoned to herself, but it still hurt. He agreed to give up some of the goods, but not all, and none of the prisoners.

Captain Argall replied that Pocahontas would be kept hostage until the rest of his demands were fulfilled. The wait this time stretched into months, then nearly a year. In the meantime, Pocahontas was brought to Henrico, a new settlement further down the river from Jamestown.

There, it would have been easy for her to escape, but she was happy in the home of an English minister, Alexander Whitaker, and his wife, who treated her with kindness and hospitality. Her mind was quick, and her memory good, so she picked up the English language quickly, learning to read and write as well.

Mr. Whitaker read to her from the Bible and taught her about Christianity. She learned eagerly, and soon she wanted to become a Christian. When she was baptized, Mr. Whitaker asked her to choose a new name, and she asked to be called Rebecca, after the wife of Isaac in the Bible.

A young man named John Rolfe often visited her at the Whitaker house. He had lost his young wife and child when his ship sunk near Bermuda, and now he owned a tobacco plantation near Henrico. He became fond of Pocahontas, and wrote to Sir Thomas Dale, the governor of the Virginia colonies, to ask his permission to possibly marry her.

In March of 1614, Sir Thomas Dale took her back onboard Captain Argall's ship, and she was taken to the shore of the Pamunkey River, near her homeland. But the ship was not alone—several other ships had sailed with hers, along with 150 armed men.

Pocahontas wept when she heard the news of Thomas Dale's plan. He had sent a message to her tribe, telling them to either surrender the rest of the goods and prisoners or fight for her. Pocahontas knew it would result in only one thing—violence and terrible bloodshed.

And she was right. The Indians responded by attacking with bows and arrows, and the English soldiers raced ashore to retaliate, burning forty villages and killing many of the Powhatan people. After days of war, two of Pocahontas' brothers asked to see her. They were brought onboard, and she greeted them joyously with embraces. Her hope returned when they promised to urge Powhatan to make peace and obtain her freedom.

John Rolfe and another man went ashore to negotiate with Powhatan, but found him absent. His brother, Apachamo, greeted them instead, and they found him wary of the endless war. He, too, agreed to push for a truce, and the ships returned to Henrico.

A month after the standoff, when she had been taken back to Henrico, John Rolfe asked for her hand in marriage. She accepted, and word of their engagement spread quickly. Her father, whom she hadn't seen for almost two years, sent word of his consent through an old uncle of hers, Opachisco. On April 5, 1614, her wedding day, her two brothers arrived in Henrico, bearing gifts for the wedding.

The small Henrico church was decorated with bouquets of spring wildflowers, fresh from the fields. A crowd of her friends, both colonists and Indians, gathered for the celebration, seated together peacefully after so much war. Looking resplendent in her white gown, Pocahontas entered on Opachisco's arm.

Cheers erupted in the church as she took the hand of her husband. Their marriage, a Native American Algonquin maiden to a white colonist from England, brought a new bond of peace between the two peoples and cultures she loved.

Epilogue

After their wedding, Pocahontas and John Rolfe lived at Varina Farms, John's plantation across the river from Henrico. In 1615, their son, Thomas, was born, and baptized with both English and Algonquin names.

A year later, the men in charge of the Virginia Colony asked Pocahontas and her husband to travel to England, in hopes of attracting more colonists with her now-famous story. To Pocahontas, it would be her chance to see the land across the ocean that she had heard so much about.

When Powhatan heard the news of their upcoming trip, he sent eleven men from the tribe to accompany the couple and their small child, along with some of Pocahontas' women friends. Tomocomo, the head

spirit man, was among them, at Powhatan's command carrying a stick on which to make notches to count the people of England.

The party arrived in the port of Plymouth, England in June, 1616. Tomocomo started his task of census taking, but soon gave up after he encountered London's busy streets. He then set about to fulfill another of Powhatan's orders—to find John Smith, in spite of the colonists' claim that he was dead. To Pocahontas' shock, she discovered that indeed he was alive, and living in London.

He did not offer to see her, but he sent a letter to Queen Anne, urging that she be shown respect and given royal treatment, lest the natives in the New World should turn against the colonists if they heard a bad report. On January 5, 1617, she and Tomocomo were presented to King James at a banquet in Whitehall palace.

Pocahontas enjoyed the sights of London, going to plays and meeting English leaders, but the pollution and smoke-filled air made her sick, and she had to move to the suburb of Brantford. It was there that John Smith paid her and Rolfe a visit, at a social gathering.

In March of the same year, she and John Rolfe, along with their son, embarked on the voyage back to Virginia. Before they had gotten further than Gravesend, along the River Thames, Pocahontas became severely ill with pneumonia, induced by London's bad air, and she had to leave the ship. Even with a doctor's care, however, she soon succumbed and, in her weakened state, died. She was buried in Gravesend, England, far from her native land. John Rolfe returned to Virginia with the sad news, arriving sometime in 1617.

In later years, John Rolfe lost his good reputation due to involvement in corruption, but Pocahontas never lived to see his fall from honor. Thomas Rolfe, who also was sickly, was left in London in the care of Sir Lewis Stuckley, where he remained until the age of 20.

When he arrived in Virginia in 1635, he discovered that his father and his Grandfather Powhatan were dead. However, he had not been forgotten, for both had left him large tracts of land and great wealth. The peace Pocahontas had helped establish lasted years after her death, and became the legacy for which her short but fruitful life was remembered.

About the author:

Jennaya Rose Dunlap wrote this story at the age of 17. Jennaya is homeschooled and the editor of a magazine for home schooled girls, ages 8 to 18, *Roses In God's Garden*, published by LightHome Ministries, www.lighthouse.net. She is also the author of *Against All Odds*, a historical novel set in World War II Poland under Nazi occupation, published as a serial story in her magazine. Jennaya enjoys writing and researching, drawing, singing and horseback riding. She enjoys spending time with her family on their acre beside a meadow with a mountain view, in California. She graduated from high school this year and plans to continue writing to publish.



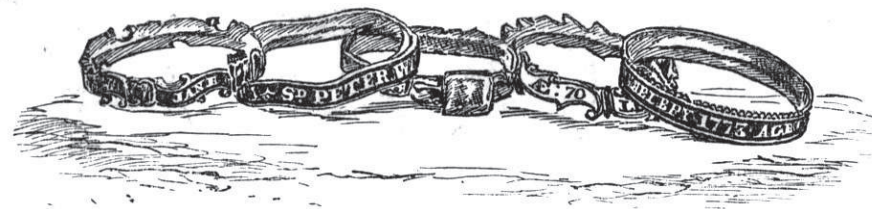
To my beautiful and precious granddaughters: Abigail Elizabeth,
Lauren Olivia and Trinity Grace. How I pray that you will grow up
to be virtuous women, serving others in joy as serving Christ. Always
remember, dear ones, that children are a blessing, not a burden. And
always serve Christ with your gifts!
Love, Your Grandma Akins

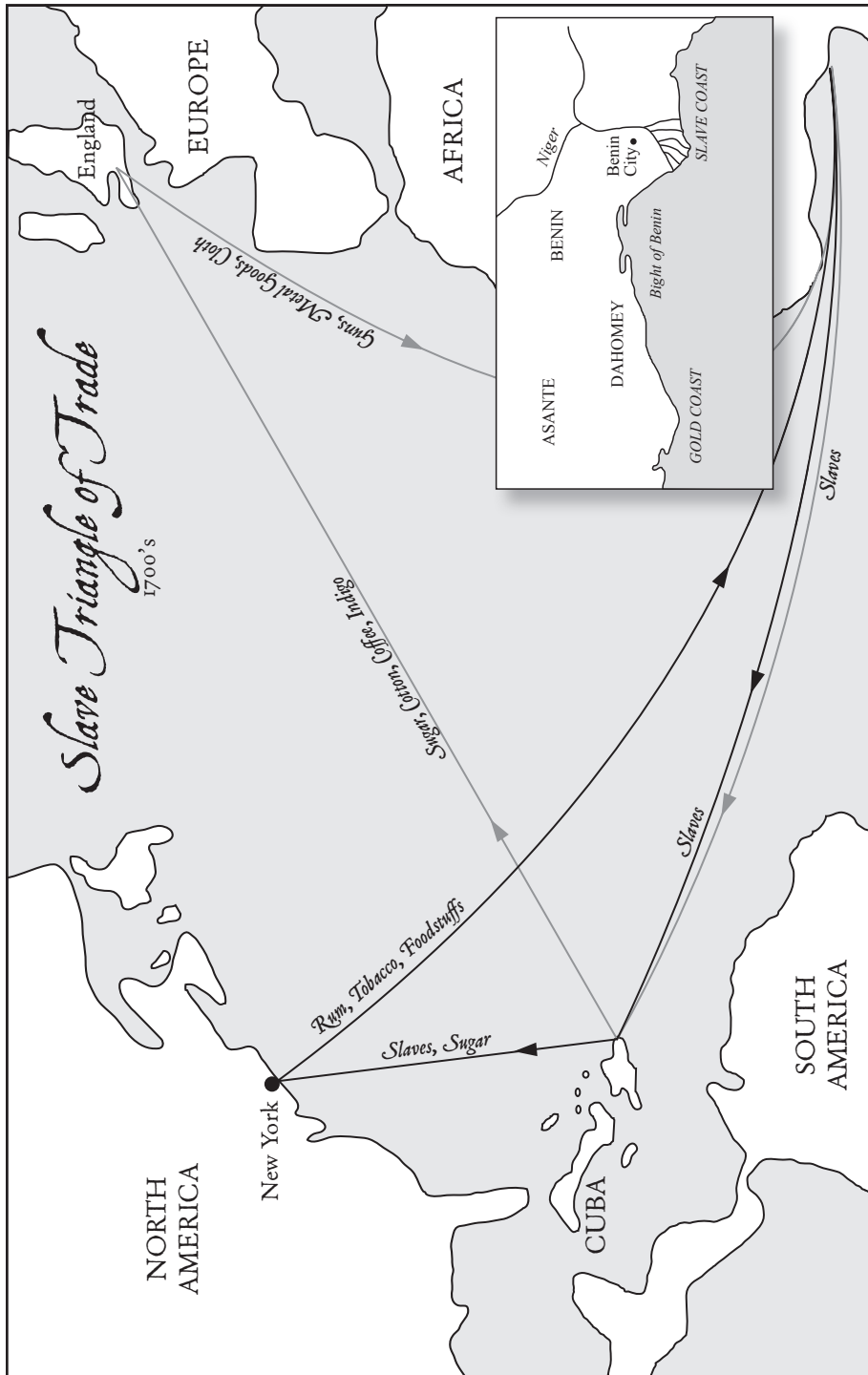
F
Catherine Ferguson

Really, *Really* Free!

1774 - 1859

by Karla Kay Akins





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VI Catherine Ferguson

Really, *Really* Free!

by Karla Kay Akins

“Judge not of virtue by the name
Or think to read it on the skin;
Honor is white and black the same—
The stamp of glory is within.”
--Rev. Lewis Tappan, 1857

1782 - *New York City*

“Mamma!! Mammaaaaaaa!!”

Eight-year-old Catherine Williams cried at the top of her lungs as she clung to her mother in the heat of an early summer day. Her eyes burned and her face was soaked with angry tears.

“Don’t leave me, Mama! Don’t leave me! Mama! Mammaaaaaaaa!”

A large, ugly white man grabbed at Catherine and tried to pull her from her mother. Before he could tear her away, her mother, Hannah

Williams, knelt before her baby girl and laid her scarred hands on her head.

“Lawd, I gib you dis baby girl. Please, Lawd, take care o’ my baby. Take care o’ her and let her know You.”

Before Hannah could pray more, a burly man reeking of whisky and tobacco grabbed her around the waist and tore her away from her daughter’s vice-like grip.

“No, Mama, NO!” Catherine screamed.

“Someone hush that child,” Catherine heard the Missus say.

“You are a big girl now,” Hannah cried bravely. “You do all that Massa Bruce tell you do. You hear me, Catherine? You be brave. Stop that cryin’ now. You are God’s now, baby girl, I done gib you to God!”

“Hush up woman and get in that wagon,” the white slave trader shouted as he pushed Hannah and slapped her shoulder.

“Don’t you hit my Mama!” Catherine cried. She wanted to hurt that slave-trader, but two muscular African slaves held on to her to keep her from the wagon. She fought and kicked with all her might. Mud from New York City’s dirt road flew up into her mouth, and landed in her black fuzzy hair. It didn’t matter. All that mattered was that she would never see her mother again because Mr. Bruce had sold her to another slave owner.

“No! Nooooo!! Don’t take my Mama! Don’t take my Mama! Please, please, don’t take my Mama! Mamaaaaaaa, don’t leave! Don’t leave! Mama! Maaaaaamaaaa!”

The rickety wagon pulled away and turned a far corner as Catherine screamed and thrashed in terror and grief. When the men let go of her she ran to the attic weeping and tearing at her clothes. Bearing more pain than her little body could stand, she curled up on her straw mattress, clung to her mother’s apron, and wept.

It would be her apron now. She was only eight, but she had been helping her mother in the kitchen from the time she could walk. Now that her mother was sold, she was the only slave in the house. Perhaps because of the war, her owners could not afford two slaves anymore.

But today, there would be no dish washing and biscuit making in the Bruce house. Today she would stay in the hot, musty attic and listen to the wind serenade her weeping with soulful cries through the cracks in the walls. Today she would close her eyes and pray she would never awake to the pain of being separated from her precious Mama. Instead of washing floors she would weep and let the memories of her mother fill all the painful empty spaces. She would just lie there and concentrate on all the precious moments she had spent at her mother’s side: going to church, cooking for the Bruce family, cleaning, doing laundry, going to the market. She would just stay in her little bed of straw and focus on the memory of her mother’s voice singing the hymns they learned at the Scottish Presbyterian Church on Cedar Street.

For days Catherine refused to eat or stir. She kept her eyes closed and dreamed of her mother’s deep, silky voice telling the stories of how she had run away from her master in Virginia, stowed away on a schooner, and how Catherine was born there. She dreamed about the father she had never known.

“Tell me the story, Mama,” she would say, late at night, when only the two of them were awake, putting away the dishes. “Tell me the story of how I was born free.”

“Your father was a free man because he became a British Soldier,” her mother would whisper. “The British gave slaves their freedom if they would fight with them. He was going to meet me in Virginie.”

“But he didna come?” Catherine would ask.

“That’s right, baby girl, he didna come.”

“But I did, I come, didn’t I, Mama?”

Her mother would laugh softly.

“You, baby girl, you wouldna wait ta be born. When I ran away from da Massa and got on that ship, I was all alone in the belly of dat big schoonuh.”

“The *Morning Glory*,” Catherine would whisper with wonder.

“Yes, it were a grand ol’ ship, baby girl. And you came. I was hidin’ down in da belly ub dat big ol’ ship. And under da the tobacco leaves, by da sugar and da cotton you was born. My own little Catherine Williams. You was born free.”

That was Catherine’s favorite part – the being born free part. Her eyes would get large with wonder at the feeling it gave her to know she was really free.

“But when we gots to Virginie, da slave man find me down there in dat ship and sell me and you to Massa Bruce.”

Sometimes, after hard days of working with hands chapped and bleeding, and their feet sore and bruised from walking in the ice and snow, her mother would hold her and rock and weep: “I so sorry, baby girl. I so sorry I wuz not strong enough to run after yew wuz born. But I gib you to God. You iz Hiz ta do wid what He wants ta.”

A body can only sleep for so long, and finally, after days on her little straw bed in that sweltering attic, Catherine opened her eyes and sobbed into her mother’s apron until tears would come no more.

1784-1785

It was Catherine’s favorite day. It was the day she took Little Massa and Little Miss to catechism at Mrs. Graham’s house.

“You sit by the backdoor, Catherine,” the kind Mrs. Graham said warmly.

“Missus sez I iz Katy now, Ma’am,” Catherine said softly.

“Why on earth?” Mrs. Graham asked.

“She sez Catherine too fine an’ elegint a name fer a slave.”

Flustered, Mrs. Graham, a fine Scottish lady who did not believe in slavery, tried not to act shocked.

“Katy is a pretty name. It suits you. Now, you just make yourself at home back here. Of course, I wish you could join us up front, but. . .”

“Yessa, Miz Graham,” Katy smiled, helping Mrs. Graham through a difficult moment. “I sho do like ta listen to da little ‘uns lessons.”

The truth was, Katy would have felt ridiculously out of place in her simple slave garments next to the finely dressed students.

Katy had dressed Little Miss in a crisp, long, white linen shift with billowy sleeves and tiny cuffs at the wrists. Over this she wore a dark green bodice with shiny metal buttons. Buttons were a true luxury in colonial New York and most people fastened their clothes with laces. But the Bruce family was a prosperous family who owned a mercantile. While Mrs. Bruce worked in the store, Katy took care of the house, the cooking and the children, and Katy loved dressing them up in their beautiful clothes and sewing for them.

The little girl’s skirt had two parts – a long skirt with a short skirt over it. The short skirt had a beautiful decorative trim that Katy had embroidered with skillful fingers to match the trim on the little girl’s white cap. Over the two skirts the child wore an apron. Her dainty little goatskin shoes peeked out from underneath her skirt, and Katy was proud of the way the little girl sat so still and mannerly, obediently reciting her catechism.

Little Massa was handsome, too, in his linen shirt and rust-colored doublet with the shiny new buttons. Katy had sewn the buttons

on that very morning before anyone else was awake. He wore green breeches that fastened with buttons, and long white stockings held up by the cuffs of his breeches. Katy had shined his leather shoes before she had gone to bed the night before so that he would be presentable, but he had managed to find a mud puddle or two before arriving.

Katy loved to handle and touch the fine clothes between her fingertips and feel the cool smoothness of the silky materials. She would imagine what it must be like to wear such softness on her own skin. All she had to wear was her dress made of osnaburg – negro cloth – nothing more than rough feed sack material. It scratched her skin and felt like burlap. Her shoes, what was left of them, had come used, raggedy, and too big from the cart man. She tucked her feet with the ugly, dirty slippers under her chair, sat straight and tall and repeated every word Mrs. Graham said.

“When I grow up and I iz free,” she whispered to herself. “I iz gonna haz myself a school and I iz gonna talk purdy jus’ like Miz Graham. Yessa, I gonna talk real purdy-like and wear taffeta and silk.”

Far too soon the lessons were over and it was time to take the children home to feed them and put them down for a nap. While they napped she began to prepare supper for the family. She was only eleven, but she moved expertly around the kitchen. And while she cooked, she repeated the lessons she had learned at Mrs. Graham’s and thought about God. She wanted desperately to read the words in His book like Mrs. Graham and her students.

After months of catechism lessons at Mrs. Graham’s house, Katy finally decided to ask if she could learn to read.

“Excuse me, Master and Mrs. Bruce,” she said with perfect English, just like Mrs. Graham one day after supper. “May I have a word with you?”

Master and Mrs. Bruce raised their eyebrows at Katy. She didn’t sound like a slave at all. She sounded like she was mimicking them! How dare this mere slip of a slave girl take such liberties!

“Know your place, slave,” the Master growled.

Katy looked down and curtsied, clasping her hands in front of her.

“Yessa Massa.”

“What is it you want?” he asked, incensed that she would ask anything of him at all.

“Massa, I wanna learn ta read the Good Book.”

Master Bruce smirked. “You can’t learn to read, don’t you know that? Your breed does not have the mental capabilities of learning higher academics. Besides, what use would you have for reading? You don’t need to read to cook and clean and tend children. You are getting mighty uppity these days. Remember your place, and don’t you forget it, or I will have to remind you.”

“You already know more than our children, Katy,” the Missus said. “You need not learn any more than that. It will not make you a good slave. If you do as well as your mother, you will do fine. Your mother didn’t know how to read, either.”

Master and Mrs. Bruce turned on their fancy heels and clicked down the hall, grumbling and shaking their heads.

“They don’ know I iz – I am – smart. I am just as smart as they are. And I ain’t no breed, neither, I iz a child o’ God just like them, too.”

Katy mumbled to herself as she scrubbed the floor. The more she thought about how Master Bruce took her mother from her, and how he treated her like a dog, the more she hated him, and the more miserable she became.

Katy attended the Scottish Presbyterian Church every Sunday with the Bruce family as she had done since she was an infant. She sat

up in the Negro section of the balcony with her mother's best friend, Dembi. She loved Sundays. On Sundays even the slaves had some of the day off, and she could be with her mother's friends and hear their stories. It brought Katy comfort to have friends who understood the feelings associated with being owned and treated like property.

She adored Pastor Mason and his voice. She closed her eyes and imagined pictures in her head when he read the stories of the Baby Jesus, Mary and Joseph. But her favorite stories were those of little baby Moses in a basket, how his mother wanted him to live and be free, and how a princess made him a prince. Most of all, she was enthralled with the way Moses grew up and set the Hebrew slaves free.

"Maybe someday, there be a Moses for us," she would whisper to Dembi, who would smile and pat her hand in a motherly sort of way.

Today Pastor Mason was talking about another kind of freedom.

"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed! We all are slaves to something," he said reverently. "But the Son of God, Jesus Christ, can make you free no matter who you are!"

Reserved, whispered "Amen's" were uttered from the slaves in the gallery, and the white folks in the sanctuary began to squirm. Pastor Mason did not believe in slavery, but he did not preach against it, either – at least, not directly.

After church Catherine went with her friends to the Pinkster grounds at the edge of town, up by the African and pauper's burial ground and the pond at the edge of the forest. There, they would eat, dance, and play games. Even white folks would sometimes come to hear the music on the violin, calabashes and flutes. The soulful songs and vigorous dancing delighted Katy, but her favorite time was when the men would whistle low and mournful songs. She would close her eyes and imagine her father whistling the same, and imagine what it would be like

to celebrate the Sabbath with both of her parents.

"Who are all these people, Dembi?" she asked her friend one day. "I know we all come from Africa, but we don't all look and talk the same."

Dembi chuckled.

"You right, chile, you right. Jus' like white folks don' look an' talk all da same, we don' neithuh. And jus' like white folks don' all come from the same place, we don' all come from jus' one place neithuh."

"See that man over there on that hogshead playin' the fiddle? Well, him and his brothers, they is from Congo. And Jethro and hiz wife Pinky? They be from a land called Nigeria."

"What about that lady there?" Katy pointed to a lady doing a jig with such vigor sweat flew out of her hair and sprayed her partner.

"Oh, that be Jenny, she be Guinea. An' befoe you start a-askin', I will point out all the others."

Dembi put her arm around Katy and pointed out people from Togo, Senegal, Gambia, Angola, Mali and the Caribbean. Katy had heard of all of these, but she was still learning everyone's names and roots.

"And Mende," Katy said.

"Mende? Now who here is Mende?" Dembi teased.

"You and me, Dembi, you know that."

"Why, I shore iz, I shore iz, and you are too," she laughed.

Dembi was a big woman with a big smile, big hands and a big voice. Her laugh carried into the forest and rang against the leaves of the trees. Katy was sure they could hear that beautiful laugh all the way to Africa.

Katy shook uncontrollably as she sat in Pastor Mason's house. It didn't smell like the Bruce house, where the scents of her baking filled it each day. It lacked the prettiness of Mrs. Graham's house, but it was

clean and neat. She was shocked at the idea that she was sitting in her Pastor's house! What would happen if Pastor Mason sent her away? Then she would never be free.

"Hello Katy," he said, coming into the room. "I am pleased to see you. My, how you have grown! It seems like just yesterday your dear mother brought you as an infant for the first time to church."

"Yes, sir, I am 14 years old now," she said, hanging her head low. She suddenly felt ridiculous in her fading dress and makeshift shoes.

"What can I do for you, Katy? Does Mister Bruce know you are here?"

"No, Reverend Mason, sir," she said meekly.

"I see," he said softly, sitting across from her. "So what is it? Have you come here to talk to me about your soul?"

Katy looked up at the Pastor with tears in her eyes.

"I want to ask Jesus to make me free, like you said, Reverend Mason. But I have lots of hate in my heart toward Master Bruce, and I don't know if Jesus will forgive me. Do you think He can?"

Pastor Mason took Katy's hands in his and smiled. "I am sure of it," he said, and prayed with young Catherine Williams as she accepted Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior. Unlike many other churches in the city, Pastor Mason encouraged slaves to come to salvation through Christ. Other churches believed slaves only wanted to convert to Christianity in order to become free of their masters.

"This Sunday, you shall be baptized and take Holy Communion," he said. "Will you be able to come?"

"Yes sir," she said, glowing. "Yes, sir, I will be there."

Word traveled fast that the little slave girl, Katy Williams, was going to be baptized and take communion at the "white folks" church on Cedar Street. No slave or person of color had ever taken communion

with the white people before. The Bruce family was embarrassed and went out of town. Even some of the slaves resented Katy "not knowing her place." But Katy bravely made her way up to the front of the church to take communion. All the eyes in the church were on her and Pastor Mason. His kind eyes and outstretched hand strengthened her to be brave.

"I wish Mama could have been here, Dembi," she said later. "I think she would have been proud."

"I know she would have been. Now you iz really free, Katy. Now you iz really, really free."

Katy nodded. It was strange not hating Master Bruce anymore. And Master Bruce himself didn't know how to handle Katy's sweet attitude. And while he resented that she had joined "his" church, it was the first time he had ever seen a true conversion, and it moved even his own cold heart.

"You are going to explode if you eat another cake, John Ferguson," Katy teased, blushing.

"Yo haz da best cakes in New Yawk, Miz Williams, I jus' cain't help myself," John said, gulping down another cake. "They iz like a piece ub heben."

"You has had enough," scolded Dembi. "Go on. You go on and get yo-self some menue¹ or moimoi² and leave Miz. Katy 'lone. Go on now." Dembi clucked and put her hands on her hips. "That boy sweet on you, Miz Katy."

"I know," Katy said. "You think he's handsome, Dembi?"

¹ A Senegalese cornmeal mush.

² Nigerian bean pudding.

Dembi smiled. Yes, he was handsome.

“He be okay far as looks go, but more den dat, Katy, he a good Christian man – and a Mende – and a free man, too.”

“Oh I just love Pinkster, don’t you Miss Dembi?” Katy giggled. Dembi threw back her head and laughed.

“Pinkster always been a happy time, Katy. Always a good happy time for da Massa and Missus to let us slaves celebrate da Pentecost.”

Every year since the Dutch Slave Masters had celebrated Pentecost in the late 1600’s, slaves had gathered on Pinkster Hill for three days of freedom from work and to visit with friends and family. Pinkster was also a chance for Katy and her friends to make their own money. Africans, slave and free, sold food native to their homeland in makeshift booths, decorated with flowers. It was during the happy days of Pinkster that Katy learned more about being a Mende, and even more about Africa.

Katy’s booth was beautifully decorated. Full, fragrant vines made of pink and lavender azaleas were generously draped on Katy’s table and canopy making it one of the prettiest booths at Pinkster. But even without the decorations, Katy’s booth would have been busy. Her cakes and pastries were a popular treat at the festival. Other booths sold berries, sassafras bark, beverages, shrimp and oysters. But nobody could match the lightness and flavor of Katy’s cakes and tarts.

“It’s almost time for the speeches and the stories!” Katy said, covering up her goods with white cotton cloths and closing her booth.

She and Dembi sat on an old raggedy blanket and listened to speeches about freedom, stories about Africa, and songs about the woes of slavery. But Katy loved the stories the best, and she especially liked it when John Ferguson told the story of how he had escaped from the south, hid with the Indians and then swam to freedom from a ship.

When it was time for the shingles dance, four men held a piece

of square canvas down on a platform while the dancers performed the “jig,” “breakdown,” and “double shuffle.” Katy was laughing at one of the dancers when she noticed John Ferguson watching her. She blushed and looked down at her hands. She turned away as he walked toward her smiling.

“Miz Williams,” he said grinning, “would ya like ta join me foe some a dem spicy fried bananas at da Ghana booth?”

“Why, Mr. Ferguson, wouldn’t you rather buy one of my pastries instead?”

John smiled. “Why I shore would, Miz Williams, I shore would.”

He took Katy’s hand and placed it on his arm. Dembi, irritated, followed them back to the booth.

“We iz closed, John Ferguson, don’t know how a body can eat so much cake. You must has hollow logs for legs,” Dembi grumbled.

In the evening, John Ferguson and Katy walked alone for a little while as Dembi watched carefully, clucking her tongue and complaining about being in the booth by herself.

“Miz Williams,” John said. “I think yew iz a very purdy woman and yew shore do knows how to make cake.”

“Why thank-you, Mr. Ferguson. I have been making cake a long time. I have even made some wedding cakes, and I make all the lemon tarts for Mr. Bruce’s store.”

“I know,” he said smiling.

“Have you been buying my lemon tarts at the store, John Ferguson?”

“I has. I has been watching yew a long time, Miz. Williams,” he said. “And you sure do talk purdy, too.”

Katy trembled. He liked the way she talked! She had worked so hard to sound like a proper lady, and this handsome man had noticed.

“You think you could ever marry a man like me, Miz. Williams?”

“Depends,” Katy said.

“Depends on what?”

“Depends on if a man like you loves God, goes to church, and doesn’t mind being married to a woman with dreams.”

“I iz a man of God, Miz. Williams. Oh, I shore is. What kind a dreams you got?”

“I want to be free so I can start a school for children to learn about Jesus – a school like Mrs. Graham’s.”

“You read?!”

“No,” Katy answered sadly.

“Then how you gonna teach dem chillins?”

“I have memorized all the catechisms and most of the scriptures they need to know. Master Bruce never let me learn to read. You read John Ferguson?”

“No, I shore don’t.”

“When I get free, I hope I can read,” Katy said.

“Me too,” John said. “Iffin’ you can read as good as you cook, you be the smartest woman in New Yawk, slave or free.”

He kissed her on the hand, and Katy felt the happiest she had felt since her mother had gone. The empty spaces inside were filling up and almost overflowed.

1787-1788

“Pastor Mason, I need to start a school.”

Pastor Mason looked at the little slave sitting across from him. Katy was one of his favorite parishioners. She was spunky, brave, hardworking, and loved the Lord more than anyone he knew. Her speech

was articulate and she sounded as well educated as any of the young people who attended Mrs. Graham’s catechism classes.

“I want to start a school to teach the poor and the slave children about Jesus, Reverend Mason. They have no one to tell them.”

Pastor Mason was startled. How did someone who had been through so much pain find the strength to dream or even reach out to others? He smiled to himself. He already knew the answer to that question. Of course it was the grace of God that sustained Katy Williams.

“Katy, I think that’s a fine idea,” he said. But how could she do it as a slave? If only she could be freed.

“I don’t know where to have this school,” she said. “I am hoping you could help me.”

Pastor Mason thought for a moment and then lifted his eyebrows.

“I will ask Mayor Duane if you can clear the old battery barracks.”

The battery barracks were located where the Dutch settlers had built a stone fort in 1628. In 1741 it was burned down when the British conquered and rebuilt it to house their soldiers. But George Washington drove them out and the fort was again destroyed. It had been abandoned ever since.

“Do you think he’d really let me?” Katy was encouraged by the idea but then suddenly her shoulders drooped.

“I think so – what’s wrong, Katy?”

“Master Bruce – I don’t know if my faith is strong enough to believe he would let me start my school. He won’t let me learn to read. Will you pray with me that he lets me start my school?”

“Yes, Katy, I will pray, even now.” And they bowed their heads together and asked the Lord’s favor with Master Bruce. After all, it was God’s idea, and it was up to God to see it come to pass.

A few weeks later on a night after dinner, Katy decided to ask Master Bruce if she could start a school at the battery barracks.

“You really don’t know your place, do you, slave?” he smirked after she asked him.

The words pierced Katy’s heart. The Bruce family was the only family she knew. And yet, they weren’t her family at all. She loved them dearly, and with the grace of God, was even able to forgive them, but they did not love her in return.

“Master Bruce, I would like your permission to clean up the battery barracks so I can start a Christian school for poor children.”

Master Bruce winced at her perfect grammar. It was unnatural to hear a slave talk so well. But then, there wasn’t anything typical about Katy. He glared at her for a moment, and then, for no reason that he could imagine, he opened his mouth and spoke.

“You may work at the barracks, but only after all other duties are accomplished and only in the evening, after the children are in bed.”

“Yes, Master Bruce,” Katy curtsied and she could hardly contain herself. She didn’t know how she would accomplish it – but God put “yes” in Master Bruce’s mouth! God had not failed her yet!

Katy worked hard day and night. During the day she worked as a slave – toiling before anyone in the Bruce home opened their eyes and long after they closed them at night. Then, she would make her way down to the barracks and begin cleaning. She wanted to make the foul place a real home for the children she wanted to teach.

One day she was working in the Bruce kitchen making teacakes when Mrs. Bruce told her to go to Mrs. Graham’s house. She had been baking for Mrs. Graham for the past two years on top of completing all of her duties at the Bruce house and cleaning up the barracks.

“I hope she wants me to make a maple nut cake,” Katy thought as

she made her way through the muddy streets of New York. She walked with her head high, even though white people avoided her as if she were vermin. They would make wide circles around her because they thought slaves were not equal to them.

“Such Christian charity,” Katy thought to herself. “Lord, I forgive them, they know not what they do,” she prayed.

She always felt peaceful in Mrs. Graham’s house. Delicate doilies and laces graced all the tables, and Katy was fascinated with the blue and black hooked rug under her feet. It must be like walking on pillows all day long, Katy thought.

When Katy entered the house, Mrs. Graham and her daughter, Mrs. Bethune, were sitting poised and proper on a green velvet camelback sofa with mahogany trim having their afternoon tea. Katy was fascinated with their beautiful dresses. Their smooth shiny hair was pulled back in tight braided buns at the base of their necks. She longed to feel the silky tendrils that hung in pretty waves at the sides of their face. Their hands were as soft and white as a baby’s. As she entered the room, she smoothed her own frizzy hair, hid her scarred, bent hands and smiled.

“Hello, Katy!” Mrs. Graham stood and greeted Katy warmly with outstretched arms. “I am so glad you could come! Please, won’t you join us for tea?”

Katy merely nodded, feeling uncomfortable in her raggedy clothes. But she loved Mrs. Graham and didn’t want to disappoint her.

“Yes, ma’am, thank-you,” Katy said softly.

“Katy,” Mrs. Graham said as she poured the tea. “I have a surprise for you.”

She handed Katy her tea and then a piece of paper with words on it that Katy couldn’t understand.

“I can’t read, Mrs. Graham, what is it?”

What *Really* Happened in Colonial Times

Mrs. Graham giggled softly and looked at her daughter who also smiled with twinkling eyes.

“Katy, darling, this paper is your freedom. Remember how you’ve been working for us a few hours each week? Well, in return for your work, we paid Mr. Bruce a down payment on your freedom, and now we have purchased it in full.”

“Freedom?” Katy whispered, nearly dropping her teacup. “I’m free?”

Katy thought her heart would never make its way back into her chest. Suddenly the room was spinning, suddenly the birds were singing much louder than before, suddenly, her entire world exploded into tiny colorful pieces. Tears spilled down her cheeks onto her faded calico dress. “I am free,” she whispered. “I am free, just like my mother wanted me to be. Free.”

She couldn’t keep from saying that word over and over as she made her way back to the Bruce house. And when she met Mr. Bruce at the door, she was no longer welcome inside the house – the only home Katy had ever known. Katy was alone on the street. She had no food, no clothes, and nowhere to go except the army barracks where she had been cleaning. She was completely alone in the vast, barren world.

So this was what it is like to be free, she thought to herself as she walked to the barracks. You can be free but you can still be hungry. Still, I’d rather be free and hungry than a slave and well fed any day.

Katy curled up on a pile of old canvas and drifted off to sleep, hugging her freedom papers tightly to her chest. And for the first time in her life, she dreamt her dreams as a woman of freedom.

1789-1840

“Katy! Katy where are you? Kateeeeeeey!”

Katy was hanging laundry on a cold winter morning in March.



The ocean was restless and loud and the wind brought sprinkles of sea water that landed on Katy's eyelashes and made her hair sparkle. Finally, she heard Dembi hollering for her like a banshee.

"Katy, for heaven's sakes, why don' ya answer when I calls you?" she whined.

"I was hanging laundry. The children last night were extremely dirty!"

Dembi clucked her tongue and shook her head. "Youse canna save da worl' Katy. Iffin you keeps takin' in all dem urchins, you will work yerself to deaf!"

"I have to help them, Dembi. God has called me to help them. I must obey. Besides," she said, hanging a holey sock on the fragile rope strung between two trees, "I know what it's like to be all alone in this world. People like Mrs. Graham have been kind to me. Now it's my turn to do kindness for others."

Since Katy had moved into the barracks, she had worked tirelessly to bake for Mrs. Graham to earn money, and God had provided miraculously for her as she took in one child after another. Black children and white children, orphaned and on the streets of New York City as a result of disease or war or poverty, came to Katy's place for a warm meal and to learn the stories of the Bible.

Katy and New York City had survived the Revolutionary War, but it had left the city ravaged and partially destroyed. Because it was a seaport town, it was a city of immigrants and escaped slaves, which produced poverty on a monumental scale. There were a few organizations that took food and wood to people in need, but there was still much more need than people and resources to meet them. Katy knew she couldn't help all the children, but she wanted to help at least the ones the Lord equipped her to.

Katy raised money to support herself and her orphans by selling her cakes. She didn't have to stand on the streets selling her cakes as much as she had to in the beginning because she now had a long list of customers who ordered from her. Between caring for the children and running her makeshift bakery, the days flew by faster than she could count them.

"Now, listen," Dembi said, "I has important news! You gonna make the cakes for the Inauguration party for General George Washington! Mrs. Bethune say so!"

Katy smiled inwardly and sat down at her kitchen table. Perhaps General George Washington himself would make his way to New York and eat one of her cakes! Her Mama would be so proud. And so would John.

"Dembi, I have another surprise for you," Katy whispered.

"What you whispering foe? Yew afraid da fishes in da ocean gonna hear you?"

"I don't want anyone to know."

"Know what?"

"Mr. Ferguson has asked me to marry him," Katy put her hands over her mouth giggling.

"Pshaw, Katy, everyone done know'd he sweet on you and you sweet on him. We all been planning dat wedding well over a year now!"

"John says we can get married in October by Pastor Williams from the John Street Methodist Church. Except that, he says we can't do the vow 'till death do us part,' even though we are free."

Dembi nodded. Free Africans and slaves living in the city were constantly at risk of being kidnapped in the night and sold to plantation owners in the south. So the slave vows did not include being together until death.

The days flew and soon Katy was married and busier than ever caring for her husband, running her bakery, and caring for and teaching the orphans in New York City. On Sundays she opened her doors to any children and families who wanted to come, and gave them meals and lessons. But New York City was changing, and soon opulent mansions were being rebuilt next to the old battery barracks. They didn't like seeing the poor coming and going from Katy's school. They decided to convert Katy's hard-earned shelter into a park. Katy was forced to move.

Katy and John found a humble house on Warren Street to rent. It had a wooden floor! Katy loved her wooden floor. No longer would she have to fight to keep the dust out of her baked goods! She was thankful for her new home. She felt like a queen.

But she worked until she was exhausted each day, and no matter how hard she pleaded for help with the children she cared for, help too often did not come.

"Mrs. Chapman, would you be able to come help me with the children?"

"Certainly not," she said, pointing her nose to the sky and walking away.

"Mr. Comstock, would you please help me teach the poor white children?"

"You will not catch me teaching those crackers³," he harrumphed, and stomped away.

"Katy, you are wasting your time. Those black orphans do not have the capacity to learn," people would say. But Katy knew better. She knew she was smart, and she knew the children she cared for were smart, too.

³ Poor white children

Not everyone was unsympathetic, and Katy was not too shy to ask for donations of clothes, shoes, linens and eating utensils. Some of the church ladies would send flour and corn meal and sugar to help her with her baking. After all – it wasn't for her – it was for the children!

"Let the little children come to me," Katy would say to those she asked to help. "It's what Jesus would do. Then it's what we should do, too." And she would quote from Matthew 25:34-40:

'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.'"

Often on his way home from work, John would gather up orphans he would find hiding inside empty hogsheads or under carts on the docks where he worked. He would bring them home and Katy would clean them up, put a hearty meal in their tummies, and teach them about Jesus. Not all of them lived with her. She worked hard to find good homes for all of them or find apprenticeships for the older ones so they could learn a trade and learn to support themselves, but in her lifetime Katy was mother to over 48 children of all races from the streets.

Soon, John and Katy had a baby girl of their own. They named

her Abigail. But New York City was becoming more dangerous every day. Katy couldn't help but worry sometimes what kind of world she had brought her daughter into. And now, not even a year later, she was with child again.

Slaves who had escaped from their owners in Haiti were making their way to New York. It wasn't long before white people began to fear black people – even people they had known for years – after hearing stories of what had happened in Haiti. Soon, New York passed laws and gave rewards for the capture of fugitive slaves, dead or alive. Katy constantly had to show her papers to prove she was free. Poor white people began to hunt fugitive slaves for the money. And one day, they went to the docks and murdered Katy's John.

“But he is a free man!” Katy cried. “He is just as free as any white man!”

After seven short happy years of marriage, Katy was a widow.

John Ferguson died bearing the name he gave himself. He was given a Christian funeral, but because of the color of his skin, Katy was not allowed to bury him in the city limits. In spite of that, Katy still took comfort in the African funeral rituals at the African Burial Grounds.

Katy had tenderly bathed and dressed John in his best clean clothes, as was customary for a Mende burial, and then wrapped him in a shroud. She fastened it tenderly with copper pins and cried as her friends placed him in a simple, pine coffin. They buried him facing east – toward Africa – and toward Jerusalem.

Not all the Mendes who were at the funeral were Christians like Katy. Some of the women performed the ancient Mende tejami ceremony, and sang the song that had been passed to them by their mothers:

Ah wakuh muh monuh kambay yah lee luh lay tambay

Ah wakuh muh monuh kambay yah lee luh lay kah

Ha suh wileego seehai yuh gbangah lilly

Ha suh wileego dwelin duh kwen

Ha suh willeego seehi yuh kwendaiyah

Everyone come together, let us work hard;

the grave is not yet finished; let his heart be perfectly at peace.

Everyone come together, let us work hard;

the grave is not yet finished; let his heart be at peace at once.

Sudden death commands everyone's attention,

like a firing gun.

Sudden death commands everyone's attention,

oh elders, oh heads of the family.

Sudden death commands everyone's attention,

like a distant drum beat.⁴

“There were so many folks at the funeral today, Dembi,” Katy sobbed afterwards. “Many more than just the twelve the law man says can come.”

“The law mans are askeered of our wailin' – they too afraid ta come arrest us,” Dembi said, comforting Katy as she laid her head on her shoulder.

The mourners' wails could be heard all the way up Broadway at night and it spooked New Yorkers because they didn't understand. The outcries were the ritual wailings for the dead. They sang songs in their own languages and they sang hymns in English. Their elegies comforted them and comforted the family members who were hurting. In spite of

⁴ Translation by Tazieff Koroma, Edward Benva and Joseph Opala

the laws forbidding slaves to hold funerals at night, doleful songs such as this Ashanti elegy were sung to bring comfort to the mourners.

“I am an orphan, and when I recall the death of my father
water falls from my eyes upon me.
When I recall the death of my mother,
water from my eyes falls upon me.”

Sadly, a few months later, Katy lost the baby she carried in her womb. In 1803, her seven-year-old daughter, Abigail, was struck with Yellow Fever and died. Once again, Katy was alone without any family to care for or to comfort her. But she never turned her back on God. Instead, she gained strength from Him enough that even in the midst of all her pain, she found the strength to care for others. But she never married again.

By the year 1810, Katy’s pastor invited Katy’s Sunday School to the new church building on Murray street. But not everyone was keen on the idea.

“I’m warning you Reverend, if you bring those crackers and slave orphans into this church, we will pull our membership,” people threatened.

“If they can’t pay for a pew, they shouldn’t be allowed to come in and dirty the premises,” others would say.

But to his credit, the Reverend wanted Katy to bring the children to church on Sundays. People had never brought the poor and homeless to church before. But things were changing. Soon after, in 1818, Katy’s church adopted an antislavery resolution. That same year, her old master finally publicly recorded her manumission.⁵

In 1830 the great evangelist Rev. Charles Finney preached over seventy sermons over a period of six months in the New York City area. There was a revival of Christian values and many of the colonists began to fight for the abolition of slavery. But there was also a group of people that wanted all black people to be sent back to Africa.

“Dembi, I am just as American as the white folks who want to send me back to Africa. I was born a free American. Why would I want to go back to Africa?”

1839-1853

Ironically, just as some people wanted to send black people back to Africa, the schooner *Amistad* arrived on America’s shores carrying 44 of Katy’s countrymen – Mendes – who had taken over the ship that had captured them.

Now those kidnapped Mendes were in jail in New London, Connecticut, awaiting trial. Katy prayed for them and their leader, Cinque, night and day. Black people who still had memories of their shackles came to Katy’s house every Friday for Bible study and to pray for the captured Mendes. She prayed for the lawyers and every Mende by name. When the case went to the Supreme Court, she prayed for each judge by name, too: Taney, Story, Thompson, McLean, Wayne, Barbour, Catron, Baldwin and McKinley. She especially prayed for Baldwin because his mind wandered.

She prayed for the Mendes’ lawyers, Roger Baldwin and former president John Quincy Adams.

“Those Mendes have families in Africa. Just like my home is America – their home is Africa, and that is where they belong. I’m going

⁵ the formal act of freeing from slavery

to be praying night and day for those dear Mendes and their lawyers all by name,” Katy assured Rev. Tappan.

When it came time for the Supreme Court trial, two of the judges who would have voted to put the Mendes into slavery were not there. The judge from Alabama did not come, and the judge from Virginia died! The Mendes were free! Rev. Lewis Tappan, a man who had gotten saved during Finney’s revivals and founder of the “Friends of Amistad Africans Committee”, was sure it was due to Katy’s prayers.

While the Mendes had been in prison, they had learned about Christ. They boarded the *Gentleman* and returned to their homes in Africa as missionaries.

When Katy was seventy years old she finally had a “be-still” storefront bakery of her very own. Even at her age she worked tirelessly baking cakes to support her mission. She had held a Bible study on Fridays in her home for over thirty years, and she raised money for Bibles for slaves, even though she couldn’t read the Bible herself. It was her dream for everyone to be able to learn to read and learn the Word of God.

On a Tuesday morning, Katy wasn’t feeling herself so decided to visit the doctor. When she returned she went straight to bed but she kept getting worse. Katy knew it was nearing the time for her to go home to be with Jesus.

“Oh!” she said to a friend ministering to her, “what a good thing it is to have a hope in Jesus.”

Katy whispered, “All is well,” went to sleep and never woke up.

Rev. Lewis Tappan, wrote in her obituary:

“During her life, she had taken forty-eight children—twenty of them white children—some from the alms-house and others from their parents, and brought them up, or kept them till she could find places for them. She

expended much money on their behalf and followed them with affectionate interest with her prayers. To my inquiry, “Have you laid up any property?” she quickly replied, “How could I, when I gave away all I earned?”

September 30, 1991

The archaeologists looked like tiny insects swarming around the gigantic cranes and tractors at the construction site at 290 Broadway in New York City. Workers had found graves of African slaves at the location where a new federal building was being built.

Stretching more than five city blocks, from Broadway beyond Lafayette Street to the east and from Chambers beyond Duane Street to the North, they were shocked to uncover the graves of 419 colonial slaves.

New Yorkers were astonished to learn their city had played such a big role in the practice of slavery in the United States. It was disquieting to realize that slaves had literally built New York City in the 1600’s. During the Colonial Period, 41 percent of New York’s households had slaves. Six percent of Philadelphians owned slaves and in Boston only two percent owned them. New York had the second largest enslaved population at the time of the American Revolution. Only Charleston, South Carolina had more slaves than New York City.

October 4, 2003

It was time to give the exhumed slave remains at the construction site a proper burial. They had been studied, photographed and cataloged, giving scholars a clearer picture of what life was like for the slaves during colonial times. Buttons, beads and pins found at the sties had given historians clues to their culture, religions and daily life.

On October 3, 2003, thousands of people from all backgrounds

gathered on the streets of New York to watch the funeral procession for the 416 slaves wind its way to their graves at the African Burial Grounds. For over 200 years, other parts of the five acre burial ground, where an estimated 20,000 Africans were buried, had been ignored as streets and parking lots were constructed over their graves. Today, they were being honored and remembered so that future generations will remember them, too.

During the ceremony for the Rites of Ancestral Return, young and old alike learned more about what it meant to be a slave. At the very spot of the colonial slave market, South and Wall Street, during the arrival ceremony, New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg said:

“It’s a painful landmark, a reminder of our city’s portion in what the poet Langston Hughes called ‘the American heartbreak’” he said. “Once the African-American residents of our city were bought and sold on this very spot. So it is fitting that here and now we reverently receive the earthly remains of some of them. As Mayor of New York, I welcome them home.”

At 1:00 PM the next day, the remains were again laid to rest in beautifully carved coffins at the African Burial Grounds memorial site.

February 27, 2006

On the 27th day of February, 2006, President George W. Bush designated the African Burial Ground a national monument. Now generations of children and their families will be able to learn the truth about slavery in colonial times. Katy Ferguson, who gave her life to the teaching and betterment of children, would be pleased. Her loved ones, and the loved ones of many others, once ignored, were now given the dignity of recognition. At one time they lived, breathed, and helped build a great and thriving nation.

The African Slave Trade brought 40,000 ships across the ocean.

Slave traders captured and forced twelve million Africans to be enslaved in the Americas. More than 80 slaves per day for 400 years were made to suffer the bondage and abuse of being owned by another person. It was the largest forced migration in world history.

Slavery is indeed an American heartbreak, but recognition of these individuals helps to heal and build a bridge between the races – just as Katy did. Katy didn’t hold grudges. She forgave her captors and prayed for her enemies. She saw problems and worked hard to solve them. To her credit, Catherine Ferguson, America’s first Sunday School teacher, still teaches us today. We need only to listen.

“But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you.”

Luke 6:27

About the author:

Karla Akins has been married to her husband, Eddie, pastor of Christian Fellowship Church in North Manchester, Indiana, for nearly 25 years. She is mother (and mother-in-love) to Melissa and her husband Brent; Jesse and his wife, Kara; Noah, 16, and Isaiah and Isaac,



11. She enjoys riding her motorcycle alongside her husband and taking pictures of her travels. Karla has homeschooled for nearly 20 years and continues to homeschool her three youngest boys and other students at her cottage school. You can read more about Karla’s adventures in life and learning at <http://homeschoolblogger.com/karlaakins>.