

*The Whittaker
Family Reunion*

Shirley A. Roe

The Whittaker Saga continues.....

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This is work of fiction. Any similarity to persons alive or dead is purely coincidental. All historical facts and historical characters are added purely for the reader's enjoyment and enlightenment. Any interaction with these characters is purely fiction.

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to readers everywhere; especially to all of the dedicated fans that continued to ask when the sequel to *Of Dreams and Nightmares* would be finished. This is for you, my friends, fellow authors and those who love to read. Enjoy!

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A special thank you to my editor, Lisa Haselton. Always conscientious and helpful, I truly appreciate all that she has done and will continue to do.

*Highly recommended, complete and accurate editing services:
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I would also like to thank Nancy Morris for her steadfast work on my cover. Much appreciated, Nancy! Last but not least, I want to thank my publisher, Richie O'Brien for helping to make this book a reality.

Other books by Shirley A. Roe

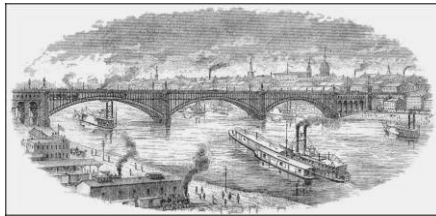
Of Dreams and Nightmares 2004

A Call to Faith and Freedom 2005

The author can be reached at: www.allbookreviews.com

The Whittaker Family 1881

Of Dreams and Nightmares introduced readers to the Whittaker family. The saga continues. The year is 1881 and the family is reunited in St. Louis.



Chapter One

Abraham

Wave after wave never ending, slapping against sand so white it could be Wyoming snow; Abraham wiped the perspiration from his brow as the sound of the water washed over him. He felt the energy of the sea recharging his tired body with each pounding wave. The old cabin faced the beach and the porch was one of his favorite places to sit at the end of a long day. Finally a cool breeze drifted across his skin. The sun was sinking low in the sky. The wooden rocker creaked under his weight as he gently rocked back and forth, the movement unconscious and soothing. It had been a long week but at last the patient was showing some signs of improvement.

Seven pelicans flying in perfect formation, one behind the other silhouetted the setting sun. Abraham tipped his straw hat, as if to say ‘Good evening.’ *Right on schedule*, a contented grin crossing his face. Every evening, like a military patrol, the brown pelicans passed by, sometimes as few as seven, sometimes as many as twenty, all in perfect formation. His left hand rested on the head of a large brown dog that snored peacefully. Unconsciously he stroked the dog’s ears and let his body relax. Abraham Whittaker loved the southern gulf shores and the people that lived there.

A group of people appeared on the beach laughing and joking as they walked, dark bare feet leaving footprints on the fresh wave-washed sand. The tall young man waved to Abraham as they approached. “Evenin,’ Doc Abe, hope you be doin’ fine, this glorious evenin’.” White teeth sparkled against his dark chocolate skin.

“Yes Tyler, I’m very warm but fine. Thank you for asking. How is your mother feeling?” Abraham rose from his sitting position and stretched his tall frame. Every muscle in his body ached, crying out for rest. The old dog didn’t stir as the man moved down the steps toward the group of youngsters.

“Ma, be feeling much better since you dun fixed her up, Doc Abe. She told us to give you her regards. How’s old Willie makin’ out?” The young man took Abraham’s hand in greeting, black and white united in friendship. The two chatted for a few minutes while the youngsters settled on the beach. Two children began piling the sand high into an imaginary fort.

“Willie is finally out of the woods, I think he is going to be up and about in no time.” Abraham turned toward the group of children. “You youngsters had better watch out, cause he will be back hollering and shouting just like before.” The young girls giggled at the thought of their uncle hollering. In spite of his gruff outward appearance, the children knew Uncle Willy had a heart of gold. They had missed his constant shouting; happy to hear he was on the mend.

“If anyone can fix him, it be you Doc Abe.” One of the young girls smiled, big eyes sparkling. Her appearance announced her mixed blood; a small narrow nose and thin pink lips graced her dark face. She was a beautiful young girl and Abraham could not help but send up a silent prayer that she would have a better future than her mother. The war had freed the slaves but freed them for what, no one knew. Most were dirt poor; many were sickly and undernourished. Some had never seen a doctor and Abraham was determined to treat as many of them as possible. At first, they did not trust him, but they soon came to realize that young Doctor Abraham Whittaker was a dedicated, loving man who thought only of others, with no prejudice or malice.

The young people moved off as the sun made its final descent into the emerald green Gulf of Mexico. Abraham climbed the cabin steps, stopping to tousle the ears of Bo, the old hound that continued to sleep soundly on the porch. Smiling down at his old friend, he went to check on Willie. Abraham had nursed Willie through the worst of his pneumonia but it had been a tough fight.

The old man's breathing was labored but he was awake. A broad grin exposed two missing teeth, his eyes bright. "Well you look much better this evening, Willie."

"I'z feelin' much betta now Doc. How's that old hound dog of your'n?" Dark skin crinkled at the corners of his eyes. His white hair was tightly curled and cropped close to his head.

"Bo is tired, Willie. He's been with me since I was a boy. Did I ever tell you how he saved me from the bear?" Abraham's thoughts returned to the day that his brother Isaac and he had gone hunting on the outskirts of St. Louis. Bo was just a pup but when a bear surprised Abraham, the dog fought with all his might to save his young, terrified master.

"Ya, I think you tole me that there story at least six times," chuckled the old black man. Spittle dripped down his chin as he laughed. "That dog and me too old for this world, time for both of us to be movin' on."

The two chatted while Abraham checked Willie's condition. He was pleased with the progress the old man had made. As he rolled him over onto his stomach, the deep scars from many beatings made Abraham wince. No matter how many times he saw them, he could not bear to think of the suffering that many of the slaves had endured. The scars on his own back began to itch. Abraham knew the sting of the strap.

"You plannin' on leavin' soon, Doc? I bet you mama is mighty anxious to see her baby boy again. How longs it bin' dis time?" Willie settled himself on the cot

and stared with admiration at this handsome young doctor. He and most of the blacks in southern Louisiana and Mississippi owed their lives to this white man with the heart of gold. In Willie's mind, Martha Whittaker had done a fine job of raising her son and although the old man would never meet the woman, he held her in deep regard. Old Willie was a fine judge of character and could often see what lay beneath the surface. Doc Abe had spent many hours telling Willie of his life and his family, always with eyes filled with love. Unlike his own long hard life, this young man was fortunate but still there was some part of him that held a dark, unspoken truth. The man had too much empathy for the abused and beaten for one never having experienced it himself. Willie could not help but think the Doc was not telling the whole story.

Abraham washed his hands in a bowl on the nightstand. A tattered but clean towel was removed from its location on a nail pounded haphazardly into the well-worn wood.

"I think I'll be leaving next week Willie, now that you are up and about. You won't mind staying here and taking care of Bo will you?" Abraham knew that Willie would take good care of his dog and his cabin. "I'm really looking forward to seeing the family- Mama, my brothers, sister and my step-father, Jeremy." A smile crossed his lips as he thought of his family. "It has been almost two years since I was back in St. Louis. I probably won't recognize that precocious little sister of mine." Chuckling at the thought of her, he added, "Anna was always quite a handful."

Chapter Two

Anna

“This is the gown that I want for the party, Mama. I love this deep shade of blue.” Fifteen-year-old, Anna Whittaker flipped through Harper’s Bazaar Magazine in her mother’s shop. Martha Whittaker was one of the most famous designers in St. Louis and most of colonial America. Martha looked up from her ledgers and smiled at the young girl. She pushed a stray lock of hair back into place. Her hair was the same chestnut brown as her daughter’s but while Anna’s eyes were green, Martha’s eyes were the deepest blue.

“The reunion is still several months off, Anna. We have lots of time to design a gown for you. How about the one you picked out last week, with the lovely jacket to match?”

“Oh, Mama, you don’t listen to a word I say. I told you I saw Millie Pearce wearing the very same design just last Saturday at the club. I absolutely must have something original. You must think of your reputation after all.” The young girl rolled her eyes in typical teenage frustration with the older generation. She flipped another page and picked up the fabric sample book. “Oh, look at this one. The bustle is absolutely lovely in back and such a beautiful short cape in the same fabric. Oh, yes this is definitely the one.”

“A bustle, next you will be telling me that you intend to wear a corset tightly laced around your waist. Young lady, you are not yet sixteen. There will be a nice straight flowing princess line for you.” Anna let out a loud pouty sigh.

“Mother, I am not a baby. All of my friends will look better than I do. The daughter of St. Louis Haute

Couture and I will be the joke of the country club. Mother really, sometimes you are so old fashioned!” She slammed the book down on the table and glared at her mother. Anna often reminded Martha of her status and reputation as one of the best designers in the business, attempting to shame her mother into submission. Martha, much to the chagrin of Anna, would not take the bait.

Martha shook her head, held her tongue and returned to the ledgers. The figures were excellent and sales were increasing every year. Although she no longer did her own bookkeeping, she always checked the ledgers personally once a week. She was beginning to think running a business was easy, compared to raising a teenage daughter. The boys were never like this. Perhaps it was because they knew hardship and cruelty at an early age and that made them so appreciative of everything they had. Anna had seen only affluence and love in her young life. A tinkling sound interrupted Martha’s thoughts.

Both heads swiveled towards the door at the sound of the bell. A tall, handsome young man, impeccably dressed in a gray business suit, entered the shop, his eyes moving immediately to the younger woman, “Good morning, Miss Whittaker. May I say that you look very lovely in that shade of yellow?” Anna blushed, flashing her biggest smile in his direction. “I hope you are planning on staying in the shop a while longer, it is always such a pleasure to see you.” Hans Kruger bowed politely in Anna’s direction, looking deeply into her green eyes. She sat spellbound. He smiled and then walked towards her mother.

“Good morning, Hans. Right on time as usual. The figures look impressive. It seems that our good fortune continues and with the summer festivals and gala balls, I am sure we will be busy.” Martha smiled at the young bookkeeper as she rose from the desk. She was fond of Hans. He had proven to be an excellent employee. “I will

be out most of the day. The latest invoices are in the basket and the shipment that arrived late last night is being unpacked. May or Ellen will bring the paperwork as soon as they are finished unwrapping the rolls of fabric.” She lifted her dark green cape from the rack and moved towards the door. “Come Anna.”

The young people’s eyes met and held just a second longer than Martha would have liked. Anna was only fifteen but she was a handful and the obvious admiration in Hans’ eyes could not be missed. She ushered her daughter from the store.

Hans hung his coat on the rack and took his place at the large mahogany desk. Instinctively, he straightened the stack of ledger books. Hans Kruger liked everything tidy and in its place. He had been working for Mrs. Whittaker for over a year now and she was a most generous employer. Hans remembered coming to her directly from college with only a few summer jobs under his belt, but in spite of his inexperience she was willing to hire him. Hans Kruger gave her one hundred percent of his efforts and she had awarded him with two pay increases in the past year. He had come to the Americas from Germany with a small inheritance from his grandfather. Every penny was used for his education and to support himself while in school. By the time he graduated, he was broke. Hans remembered sitting in the church pew, frightened, alone and praying for guidance. The next morning God directed him to the St. Louis Haute Couture and his career began. Martha had chosen him over several other candidates and he was sincerely grateful, determined to be a conscientious employee. The arrangement had worked out well for them both. Jeremy Whittaker, Martha’s husband, had even rented him a flat above the import export business for a reasonable fee and life was very good for Hans Kruger at the moment.

His interest in Anna was recent, but the thought of being the Whittakers’ son-in-law was very appealing. He

had always thought of Anna as a child; until this summer, when she seemed to blossom before his eyes. She was a beautiful young woman, with flowing chestnut hair and large green eyes. Her young body was that of a woman and he felt his pulse race every time she was in the room. Unlike most of his party-loving pals, at twenty years old, Hans was ready to find a wife and settle down. He glanced longingly at the door, before picking up his pen and beginning his day.

“I think Hans is simply dreamy, don’t you Mama?” Anna was still remembering how he bowed so elegantly, his dark hair falling over his forehead, his large dark eyes looking deeply into her own. She lifted her dainty foot into the carriage, carefully holding her skirt out of the way with her hand. Anna Whittaker was young but she was very polished and sophisticated.

“I think Hans is an excellent employee and the only man that I think is ‘dreamy’ is your father. Besides, as I have to remind you constantly, you are only fifteen.” She followed her daughter into the carriage. “There’s your father now. Jeremy, over here!” Martha waved affectionately to her husband. A huge smile crossed his face. He returned the wave. Jeremy Whittaker was a tall man with hair the color of caramel, peppered with gray and eyes the same green as Anna’s. At fifty-one years of age, he was a handsome man. Wearing a stylish three-piece suit, complete with waistcoat, he was slim and trim. Jeremy locked the door of his import-export business and crossed the street to join his wife and daughter in the carriage.

“Are you ladies ready for a ride out in the country? Isaac is expecting us and I can’t wait to see Thomas’ new horse.” He took his seat and clasped the reins. Pulling Martha to him, he kissed her lovingly. Anna swooned sarcastically in the rear seat.

“Don’t you two ever quit? Honestly, my friends’ parents aren’t always kissing and hugging like you two.

Mother is almost forty, for heaven's sake!" Jeremy reached back and swatted at his saucy daughter. She ducked to the side, laughing.

"You should look so beautiful when you are an 'old lady of forty,' Princess." He smiled at his wife, who gave him a look that made his heart beat fast. How he loved this woman. No matter how long they were together, Jeremy always felt like a new bridegroom with Martha.

"I will have you know that forty is simply the prime of a woman's life. Besides, who was just gushing over a certain 'dreamy' young man?" She glanced over her shoulder in Anna's direction, winking at Jeremy. "Now can we change the subject? My birthday will be here soon enough." The family rode the ten miles together, enjoying each other's company and discussing the upcoming reunion with the other members of the Whittaker family. Martha's three stepsons would all be reunited once again at the party. Isaac, the eldest, lived in the country outside St. Louis. Martha and Jeremy saw him often, however, his two brothers had moved far from St. Louis. Abraham, the doctor, lived in the south near New Orleans and Ezekiel, the college professor and the youngest, had traveled to England and now resided in the Whittaker homestead, Pheasant Run in Northumberland, England.

Martha was excited to see her boys again. Just thinking of them brought back memories. She was only eighteen when she had married their father, Jebediah Whittaker back in England. A new husband by an arranged marriage, with three young boys to care for was the last thing she had wanted at that point in her young life. The eldest boy, Isaac was ten at the time and only eight years younger than Martha. Jebediah Whittaker was a hateful man and took his unwilling family to the wilds of Wyoming for his own deceitful purpose. Her marriage was a nightmare but the boys had become like her own after the death of their father. She had taken full responsibility in

raising them to be fine young men. Later, she fell in love with Jebediah's older brother, Jeremy and finally married the man of her dreams. Anna was the fruit of their love. Jeremy became the boys' father as well as being their uncle and the family was extremely close. She could hardly wait to see them all again.

Chapter Three

Isaac

“Pa, I see Grandad’s carriage coming over the field. Can I take Chestnut and go to meet them?” The young lad pushed his hat back on his dark hair and tightened the cinch on the saddle. “Pa did you hear me?”

A man, looking very much like an older version of the boy, walked from the barn. He was tall, thin and had dark eyes and hair. He smiled at his son’s excitement, knowing full well how much the boy wanted to ride his new horse. “Thomas, I think we should just wait here. They will be along soon enough.” The boy’s expression fell. Isaac laughed to himself. “Oh, go on. I know you can hardly contain yourself.” The boy was up and riding away before he finished speaking. Isaac laughed out loud as dust, pounded by the horses hooves, settled like a cloud on his overalls.

“What are you laughing at, Pa?” A small, red haired girl appeared from the barn. Isaac reached down and scooped her up in his arms. “Pa, why are you laughing?”

“I am laughing at that brother of yours, Pumpkin. He could hardly wait to ride off on Chestnut. Did you finish feeding the goats?” He chucked the little elfin girl under her freckled chin, then, tickled her belly. She giggled happily, squirming in his embrace.

“Let me down, Pa, let me down.” She jumped to the ground and ran in circles around her father. He reached for her but she managed to avoid his grasp. The two enjoyed the game until the girl grew bored and ran back into the barn. Isaac turned back to the fence rail and rested his folded arms on the wood, worn smooth from years of use, surveying his property. It was a large farm, several hundred acres and many horses stood in various paddocks

within his sight. A stream ran through the north end and cattle grazed lazily on the north forty. He was proud of his farm and his family. His wife Annabelle, Thomas, five-year-old Sissy, and the baby were his whole life and it was hard to believe that they had lived here for nine years now. He thought about seeing his brothers again and his heart was filled with love. The three were very close. He had missed Abe and Zeke. Isaac remembered the day the three of them had stood in this very spot years ago. It was the day that his two brothers revealed a long hidden secret, a secret that set Isaac free. They had seen what he had done that day in the church in Wyoming and they forgave him. He nodded in assent to the memory and returned to the barn.

Thomas rode like the wind on his new horse. Jeremy and Martha waved as he approached. Proud grandparents, they were impressed with the boy's skill. At nine years old he rode like the adult cattlemen, he and the horse melding together as one. "Just look at that boy ride. He is smiling from ear to ear." Jeremy pulled the carriage to a halt and waited for Thomas. Anna could not help but smile at her nephew. His happiness was contagious.

"Grandma, Granddad, Auntie Anna good to see you. How do you like Chestnut?" The boy and horse came to an abrupt halt, spraying the carriage with a cloud of dust. Martha and Anna waved their gloved hands in front of their faces. Jeremy laughed and jumped down to inspect the newest addition.

"Looks like a fine animal, Tommy. Chestnut is a good name for him too. Jump down and give your Gran a hug before we head for the house." Jeremy continued examining the horse as young Thomas climbed into the carriage and hugged Martha. It was a quick hug, as nine-year old boys are not much for 'mushy stuff', as Thomas was always reminding his mother and grandmother. Martha hugged him tightly and brushed his cheek with her lips as he pulled away and returned to the horse. Jeremy moved

his hands over the horse's muscled trunk and legs, admiring the magnificent creature. Anna impatiently brushed the dust from her dress. She removed the pin and shook her small hat, a look of irritation on her face.

Martha turned toward her. "I think Thomas likes horses better than girls." Martha and Anna laughed to each other. Isaac had raised a farm hand and horse lover in Thomas, much like himself and Martha couldn't have been happier. There was a time long ago when she worried whether Isaac would ever smile again, but life had a way of making things right. He and Annabelle and the children were prospering and happy.

"Is Annabelle home, Mama? I do want to talk to her about that gown that I saw in Harpers." Anna was still concentrating on her gown and Martha knew that her daughter and Annabelle would have many in-depth discussions about it. Annabelle was young and Anna identified more easily with her than with her mother. Martha did not feel slighted, she was grateful that Annabelle was so patient with the young girl. Thinking back she remembered how her daughter-in law came to work in the dress shop when she was younger than Anna. She now knew a great deal about the designs and the business. She was Martha's right hand when it came to sewing and finishing. In the sales department, Loretta Wells, Martha's best friend and confidant, was the one she counted on. Loretta had the gift of the gab and could sell anything to anyone. She was very supportive over the years, personally as well as in the business. Martha was most fortunate to surround herself with unselfish loving people and each morning she thanked the Lord for each one of them. Bringing herself back to the present, she looked out at Jeremy and their grandson and smiled. Behind her, Anna was still chatting incessantly about the gown and how she and Annabelle would pick out the fabric and the

accessories. Jeremy returned to the carriage and followed Thomas, far enough behind to avoid the dust.

The carriage arrived in front of the large farmhouse where Annabelle stood waiting, a small bundle in her arms. Exiting quickly from the dusty carriage, Martha ascended the stairs and claimed the bundle, her newest granddaughter Amy. "How is my precious angel?" she cooed at the tiny infant.

"You wouldn't think she was an angel last night when she hollered and screamed most of the night. She seems quite content now that the whole family is up and about however." Annabelle laughed her tinkling laugh that Martha had grown very fond of over the years. Hugging her young sister-in-law and then her mother-in-law, Annabelle ushered them into the house. Jeremy and Thomas were already heading for the barn.

"Where is Sissy?" Martha searched the room for her other granddaughter as she cuddled the sweet smelling Amy.

"In the barn with the men, where she always is Mother Martha. You know Sissy, up with the sun and into the barn before the rooster crows. A real farm girl, that one." Annabelle poured the tea that was brewing in the delicate china teapot. Martha took a seat at the kitchen table facing the large living room. The room was decorated in a lovely floral print. Hand sewn curtains and slipcovers added a real country charm to the house. Annabelle had personally sewn every stitch with her usual perfection. A large stone fireplace filled one wall and a pile of split logs were piled neatly on the hearth. A large portrait of Isaac's biological mother, Alicia Whittaker hung over the mantle. She had died when Isaac was only five-years-old. Jeremy had brought it from England and given it to Isaac and Annabelle on their wedding day.

Fresh flowers added a splash of color on a white linen tablecloth and Martha felt comfortable and welcome.

Anna wandered around the room silently, impatiently waiting for the chitchat to die down so she could capture Annabelle's complete attention. She stopped and gazed out the window at her father and older brother in front of the barn. The tiny red haired girl was perched in Jeremy's arms as the men talked. *I remember when you used to carry me like that, Father. How simple life was then.* Instinctively she wanted to go and be a part of that group, but the thought of getting her shoes muddy kept her in the house. Anna Whittaker was undeniably not a farm girl.

Isaac gave Jeremy a tour around the farm, pointing out the latest additions including a fresh flock of baby chicks, three new horses, one of which was Thomas' pride and joy and a large addition on one of the out buildings. Jeremy noticed the pride and confidence in his son's voice as he spoke of the expansion and the latest news from the west. Isaac had once ridden 'shotgun' on wagon trains traveling as far west as California and Jeremy knew that Isaac still, sometimes longed for that life. Loretta Wells' father, Arthur Langley had taken Isaac on as his 'shotgun' when the boy was only a teen and Isaac had loved the freedom, the travel, and the challenge of the cowboy's life. It was only because of Annabelle and the birth of Thomas that Isaac had settled down nine years ago. Jeremy still saw the longing in Isaac's eyes as he talked of California, Utah and the pioneer trails west.

Thoughts of the west made Jeremy remember the time, years ago, when he and his best friend, Austin Wells had arrived from England in a desperate search for Martha. John McGuire, Martha's father had hired them to find her and bring her home. John had discovered the true character of Jebediah Whittaker shortly after giving his daughter's hand in marriage to the scoundrel. In a panic to bring her home, he hired the young men to find her. The two English gentlemen had traveled frantically across the country to Wyoming where they finally found Martha and Jebediah

living in a log house with the three boys. Isaac was a very different boy then. Sullen, quiet, and angry at the world, a person would find it hard to believe this was the same young man. Jebediah was a cruel and heartless man. After a strange set of events and the death of Jebediah, Austin and Jeremy rescued Martha and the boys and returned to St. Louis with the intent of going back to England. However, the decision to stay in St. Louis had proven to be a good one for all of them. *How all of our lives have changed since then*, Jeremy thought as he followed Isaac.

“Granddad, can you piggyback me? Granddad!” Sissy pulled on Jeremy’s trousers and he lifted her up onto his shoulders. He trotted towards the house with the giggling girl. Isaac followed, stopping to remove his boots before entering and setting a basket of fresh eggs aside for Martha to take home.

“Mama, look at me.” Annabelle looked out the door to see Sissy riding high on Jeremy’s shoulders. “I’m riding my new horse too, just like Tommy.” Annabelle pecked Jeremy on the cheek as he bent down to enable her to reach the child. At over six feet, his shoulders were a far reach for the five- foot Annabelle. She lifted the tiny girl from his bent form, settling her on the kitchen floor and Sissy ran rambunctiously into Martha’s arms.

“Grandma!” The two snuggled long and hard until finally Sissy settled herself on Martha’s lap. Isaac kissed his mother’s cheek and poured two large glasses of water from the pump at the kitchen sink. Handing one to Jeremy, the two men moved toward the comfortable couch in the living room.

“Sissy, go and change your clothes before you get Grandma all smelly. Go on.” Anna rose from her chair and walked towards her mother. Sissy slowly and reluctantly grabbed Anna’s hand and propelled her towards the stairs. Once up in her room, it wasn’t long before the adults could hear the laughter from above.

“Sometimes I forget that Anna is still more child than woman.” Martha looked affectionately at her daughter-in-law who was thinking about her own offspring.

“That child! I don’t know what to do with her. Her mother and her grandmother are dress designers and she wants to work in the barn. At least you don’t have that problem with Anna.” Annabelle looked at Martha in desperation. “Oh Martha, do you think there is any hope?” Martha smiled and patted Annabelle’s hand. The tiny baby cooed from her location in the cradle by the fireplace.

Martha brushed the dirt from her skirt left behind by Sissy, looking at her daughter-in-law with affection. “Perhaps you had better set your sights on Amy, instead.” Jeremy and Isaac laughed.

End of Sample