

A woman with dark hair, wearing a pearl necklace and a historical-style dress with a lace collar, is shown in profile from the chest up. She is looking out over a beach and the ocean at sunset. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and soft blue. The overall mood is romantic and contemplative.

CAN A WOUNDED
UNION SOLDIER
SHOW HER THE TRUTH
ABOUT LIFE AND LOVE?

*Northern
Light*

ANNETTE O'HARE

Northern Light

Annette O'Hare

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons living or dead, business establishments, events, or locales, is entirely coincidental.

Northern Light

COPYRIGHT 2015 by Annette O'Hare

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission of the author or Pelican Ventures, LLC except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles or reviews.

eBook editions are licensed for your personal enjoyment only. eBooks may not be re-sold, copied or given to other people. If you would like to share an eBook edition, please purchase an additional copy for each person you share it with.

Contact Information: titleadmin@pelicanbookgroup.com

Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated are taken from the King James translation, public domain.

Cover Art by *Nicola Martinez*

White Rose Publishing, a division of Pelican Ventures, LLC
www.pelicanbookgroup.com PO Box 1738 *Aztec, NM * 87410

White Rose Publishing Circle and Rosebud logo is a trademark of Pelican Ventures, LLC

Publishing History

First White Rose Edition, 2016

Paperback Edition ISBN 978-1-61116-536-4

Electronic Edition ISBN 978-1-61116-518-0

Published in the United States of America

Dedication

Encourager: one who inspires with hope, courage, or confidence. Lovingly dedicated to those who have encouraged me on my journey and to my greatest encourager, Jesus Christ my Lord.

Praise

“From the first sentence to the book’s stunning conclusion, Annette O’Hare’s brilliant first novel *Northern Light* captured my heart. O’Hare’s storytelling is flawless and her grasp of Texas history is spot-on. This tenth-generation Texan heartily approves! Do yourself a favor and savor this meeting of North and South on the Bolivar Peninsula. I promise it will be the best book you’ll read in a very long time!”

~ Kathleen Y’Barbo, bestselling author

“North meets South in this romantic tale, filled with Texas-sized twists and turns. From a lighthouse on the Bolivar Peninsula to New York and then back again...this story will take you on a journey you won’t soon forget. I’m happy to recommend this debut novel from author and friend, Annette O’Hare.”

~ Janice Hanna Thompson, bestselling author

*O send out Thy light and Thy truth: let them lead me;
Let them bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy
tabernacles. ~Psalm 43:3*

Part One

1

September 5, 1864, Bolivar Peninsula, Texas
"That smarts!"

Margaret Logan shucked the calfskin glove from her hand and stuck it under her arm. Pain coursed through her middle finger as blood pooled at the tip. A single crimson drop fell onto the prickly cotton boll that clung tightly to the bush.

Mama would have come up with a charming anecdote had she seen the deep red blood against the lily-white cotton. More than likely, it would have been some illustration concerning the blood of Jesus Christ and how it could wash a person white as snow.

Saving grace was the last thing on Margaret's mind. There was a long dingy sack trailing behind her that she needed to fill. Her family depended on the income they would receive come time to cash in their money crop: Sea Island cotton. She wiped the blood on the inside hem of her light blue apron and thrust her hand back inside the glove. The sight of blood sickened

her. Plenty had been shed since the war began. Enough to fill a river from the Yankee North to the Confederate states of the South.

The war had taken everything that was good and decent and ripped it to shreds. She no longer knew the tranquility of her beautiful lighthouse home near New Orleans. Nor did she have the loving caress on her cheek of her beloved fiancé, Jeffrey Fontain. Instead, she wiped the sweat of hard labor from her brow with her own calloused hand.

"Margaret." Mama paused from her picking and raised her head. "The tide should be out by now. Go fetch your pail. We'll be needin' fresh oysters for the evening meal."

"Yes'm." She straightened. Pain surged through her back from being hunched over all afternoon pulling cotton. It made her happy to get out of the field for a while, even if it meant doing another chore.

Margaret's younger sister, Elizabeth, stood to her full height as soon as the words came from Mama's mouth. Her face pinched into a scowl and gloved hands flew to her hips. "Why can't I go too, Mama? Why does Margaret always get to go do the collecting?"

Mama pressed a palm against her back, a look of irritation etched on her face. "Because, Elizabeth, I happened to notice Margaret's sack is almost full and yours is lacking considerably. Besides, Margaret is the oldest, and I can trust her not to get distracted by every butterfly and black-eyed Susan she sees along the way. Now get yourself back to work and watch that sassy mouth of yours."

Elizabeth huffed and stamped her foot before returning to her cotton pulling.

Margaret glanced at her mama, who gave her a nod and then turned away. She tugged the heavy cotton sack out of the field. It goaded Margaret to walk across the platform of what had been the base of the Bolivar Point lighthouse. Its absence had mocked her since the day they'd arrived on the desolate Bolivar Peninsula.

Not even Papa was cut out for the grueling work of pulling cotton. He was a trained light keeper, not a common farmer.

But like it or not, Margaret had to cross over the aggravating stretch of emptiness to hang her sack on the hook where they were stored. Removing her shoes, she collected her pail and slipped her feet into Papa's heavy boots. A mild September wind tossed her skirt around as if she were dancing a reel. Pink powder puffs grew wild in the sandy soil as she walked the path toward the bay. The delicate flowers swayed to and fro in the gentle breeze.

Margaret's feet slipped inside the oversized boots. The warm sun felt nice on her shoulders, not blazing hot as it had been only a month earlier. She sensed a slight whisper of change in the air as a song found its way into her thoughts.

*"Oh! Lilly, sweet Lilly,
Dear Lilly Dale."*

It surprised Margaret when the words escaped her lips. The sweet melody comforted her.

*"Now the wild rose blossoms
O'er her little green grave."*

The words caught in her throat, and she looked around, nervous that someone might be listening. Satisfied there was no one around for miles, she continued.

"'Neath the trees in the flow'ry vale."

The song sounded nice, even if the words spoke of a poor young girl's passing. Strange how death and dying didn't seem to bother her as they once did. The war-torn bodies of Confederate soldier boys they'd found floating at the water's edge cured her of any fears that death once conjured up.

A strong odor of fish emanated from the bay where she regularly collected oysters. The receded tide caused the foul smell, letting Margaret know it was the perfect time of day for gathering. She walked a good distance past where the water had been earlier.

Papa's heavy boots sank into the mushy sand with each step she took. It was a chore to pull her foot out without leaving the boot behind. She stepped over clumps of golden-colored seaweed amassed on the beach, left behind by the outgoing tide. A lone hermit crab picked up his shelly house and skittered for the water. Surprised by the sudden movement, Margaret stopped in her tracks, nearly falling over backwards.

Gathering food for the family was a welcome task. She would have rather rounded up a thick, juicy roast beef for their supper, but that was out of the question. Every head of cattle on the peninsula that the Confederate army hadn't procured had been pilfered by hungry Union raiding parties.

Her parents considered it a blessing to have access to the Gulf of Mexico and all the shrimp, crab, oysters, and fish they could eat.

But Margaret, her two younger sisters, and brother had grown tired of every kind of seafood the Gulf had to offer. Oh, how she missed the taste of beef. She smiled, secretly imagining running into a young man with a nice fat cow who would trade her for some

magic beans. She chuckled.

The same gloves she'd used earlier in the cotton field were used to pick up the sharp oysters and place them in her pail. Back home, her mother had traveled the short distance to New Orleans to purchase seafood from the fish market. Now they depended on the land for their food, and if God didn't provide it, they didn't have it.

Mama would reason that if they didn't have it, they didn't need it.

Margaret would argue that point on a regular basis. There were several things she needed, like more books. But she'd all but given up on fighting that battle. *"The only book you need is the Good Book, and it's on the shelf."* Mama never listened to her. A girl stuck in the middle of nowhere, grieving the loss of everything she held dear, needed an escape, and she certainly wouldn't find that between the pages of the Bible.

Margaret came to a place where the pickings were abundant and filled her pail to the brim. One particular oyster caught her eye. She picked it up and noticed it stretched far beyond the end of her hand. *Oh, if only there was a pearl inside to match the size of the shell.*

The thought made her think of her family's yearly carriage ride to the Mardi Gras in New Orleans. How she missed the revelry, the mysterious, masked ladies in their magnificent flowing gowns. How they sparkled in the moonlight, their necks and ears dripping with diamonds and pearls. Beautiful, glistening pearls. Margaret swayed back and forth to a familiar melody, keeping time with the waves lapping around the big, cumbersome boots, the huge, sandy oyster clutched to her breast.

With a sigh, she dropped the shell onto the sand,

as she'd already collected plenty for supper. She noticed something shiny hiding amongst the oysters. Bending over, she set her pail down and pushed away some of the rough shells to see what it could be. Without thinking, she picked up the artillery ball. Her cheeks heated, and she shot up from the ground, the shiny ordinance still in her hand. "Oh, Lord, can't I even do my chores without being reminded of the death constantly surrounding me?" she cried out in anguish and threw the ball down the beach. That's when she saw him.

The body lay half in, half out of the water. His clothing fluttered with the movement of the waves pulsing around him. Margaret looked heavenward and released a long breath. Slowly, she approached the bloody remains. His eyes were closed—he didn't move. She knelt beside him and gazed into his face. Her heart felt heavy. Had he left a young woman behind to grieve like her Jeffrey had? Did she even yet know of her loss?

Seawater colored the sailor's outer garment, making it look darker. The standard-issue gray wool kepi was missing from his head, his dark hair long enough to sway in the water. He wore a mustache and beard, the color a shade lighter than his hair.

Margaret extended a hand to his face. Such a handsome young man, probably the same age as her Jeffrey had been. She brushed sand from his cheek, her heart broken for whomever would grieve for him.

A long slash ran the length of his forehead, and there was a distinct hole in his shoulder. A bloody gash on his side all but cut his belt in half. Her hand stretched toward the tarnished gold buckle.

Realization dawned; the letters were not the

Confederate *CS*, but the *US* of a Union sailor.

“Yankee!”

Her mind flashed through the stories she’d heard about Union men and the atrocities they’d performed against southerners...especially women. Yankee raiding parties had taken almost everything useful from the peninsula. Instinctively, she scanned the horizon in search of any approaching Union military men, sailors or soldiers. She had to get away before his fellow sailors returned to collect the body.

She crouched, poised to run.

Before she could withdraw her hand, his eyes shot open and he grabbed her wrist.

Margaret screamed in terror, trying to pull from his grip. What if he had a weapon? What did he plan to do to her? She pounded on his arm with her other hand, trying to free her wrist. But his grip was tight.

“Please help me.” His voice was almost too weak to hear, but he peered straight into her eyes. His hand went limp and fell to the sand.

Margaret stood and backed away, but both boots stuck deep in the sand. She lost her balance and fell backwards, landed on something sharp. The sleeve of her dress ripped. She grabbed her arm as blood seeped through the tear. A bloody, jagged shell had mangled her wrist. Tears threatened, but terror held them at bay and gave her the clarity she needed to get away.

Margaret pushed off the sand and pulled her feet out, boots and all. Righting herself, she backed away, holding her injured arm, chest heaving with every breath.

Without a second thought about the pail containing the family’s supper, she turned toward the trail, ready to bolt. But something tugged at her heart,

urging her not to run...those pleading blue eyes. She moved a safe distance from the sailor. Her mind raced. *What do I do? Should I help him? Is he dead now? He did ask for my help—but he's a Yankee...*

"Papa will know what to do." She hiked up her skirt and took off. Despite the fact that her father's awkward boots sank in the sand with every footfall, she quickly reached the trail toward home.

Before the sailor was completely out of sight, Margaret glanced over her shoulder for another look at him, wondering if the ordeal had actually happened. But the searing pain shooting through her bloody arm gave her all the proof she needed.

The man seemed to be awake again and was feeling around for something.

Her hand covered her mouth and she let out a loud gasp. *Dear Father in heaven, he's looking for his gun!*

2

“Papa, Papa, come quick!” Margaret raced up the property line toward the house. Her frantic cries demanded the attention of the entire family.

The youngest two Logan children, four-year-old June and baby Jeremiah, peered through the window of the front room.

Papa emerged from behind the shed, a hammer held high as if ready for an attack. “What’s going on out here?”

She needed to catch her breath.

Papa was the first to reach her side.

Mama and Elizabeth rushed out of the cotton field toward her.

“What on earth happened, Margaret?” Mama gave her a good looking over. “Did you fall? Your backside is covered with sand.”

Papa lowered the hammer. “Give her a chance to speak, Caroline. She’s plumb out of wind.”

Elizabeth pointed at Margaret’s torn dress and blood-stained arm. “Oh, my goodness, look at her arm, Mama. She’s bleeding!”

Mama ripped the sleeve even further, revealing the long jagged cut left from the oyster shell. “That’s a nasty gash, Margaret. Let’s go in the house and get that taken care of.” Mama tried leading her toward the house, but she didn’t budge. “Now come on...”

"Mama...wait just a minute...please!" She pressed her injured arm to her chest. She cared not that blood from her arm seeped into the bodice of her dress, possibly ruining the garment. She pointed toward the bay with her other hand. "There's a man. I thought he was dead...but he wasn't."

Mama's eyes narrowed. "Did he hurt you? Did he do this to you?" She looked at Papa. "Jebediah, someone has hurt our girl."

The front door flew open and June ran out. Baby Jeremiah toddled as fast as his legs could carry him to Margaret's side.

The sight of blood had drawn them like flies to molasses.

"Sissy, what happened to you?" June asked.

Mama attempted to shoo them back into the house.

Papa looked squarely into Margaret's eyes. "Did he hurt you, Margaret?" He touched her trembling arm.

Margaret shook her head and waved her hand. "No, Papa, he didn't do this to me. I fell on a sharp oyster shell, and it cut my arm open." She struggled to get the words out. "He's...he's a sailor—and he's half dead."

Papa stepped closer, his voice steady and calm. "All right then, Margaret, tell me exactly what happened."

"He's a Yankee, Papa!"

Elizabeth and June clasped their hands over their mouths.

Baby Jeremiah slapped tiny hands over his face too.

Papa had given strict warnings to his daughters

about steering clear of anyone who even remotely resembled a Union soldier.

"Whatcha gonna do, Papa?" June asked.

Mama slipped an arm around Margaret's waist and eased her head onto her shoulder. It calmed her nerves when Mama stroked her long hair.

Papa rubbed his stubbly jawline. "Well, I suppose we ought to go see what we can do." He turned to his youngest daughter. "June, go fetch my rifle and powder flask."

"You gonna shoot him, Papa?" June asked. The unexpected excitement seemed to have the little girl wound up.

Papa furrowed his eyebrows and shook his head. "No, June, I'm not planning to shoot anyone. I just want to be cautious and make sure everyone is safe, that's all."

"But you *might* shoot him, right, Papa?"

"All right now, run along and get the rifle and powder flask." Papa turned to Mama. "Caroline, go in the house and tend to Margaret's arm. While you're there, gather some extra bandages. Sounds like we might need them." He handed the hammer to his middle daughter. "Put this away in the shed, Elizabeth. I also need you to haul in those cotton sacks from the field. I'm guessing we're done pulling for today. And when you get done with that, meet me out by the pen; I need a hand hitching the mule to the wagon."

~*~

Mama slung Jeremiah over her hip and helped Margaret into the house, even though she didn't really need help. The trip to the kitchen was made even more

difficult with June helpfully pushing her from the rear. Mama and June eased her into a chair. She didn't squelch their doting; she didn't have the energy.

Mama set Jeremiah down and collected a bowl of water and a rag to clean Margaret's wound.

The little boy held out his arms for Margaret to pick him up. She instinctively pulled him onto her lap, forgetting the pain from the gash.

Little June's eyes grew at the sight of her baby brother climbing on her injured sister. Tiny hands gripped her hips. "Jer'miah, you get down off her right this instant!"

Jeremiah buried his face in Margaret's chest at June's scolding.

Mama pursed her lips. "Let him be, June. He's worried about Margaret, and it's time for his nap." Mama rummaged around in the cabinet where their meager medical supplies were kept. The roll of gauze was almost gone. Between the four kids and Papa, Mama had doctored more scrapes and cuts than should be allowed.

Mama took down the bottle of laudanum and slipped it into her apron pocket.

"The cut isn't that bad. I don't need the laudanum."

Mama dipped the rag into the water and then washed blood and sand from the jagged wound.

Margaret pressed her baby brother to her chest and winced at the pain.

"I know, Margaret. It's not for you. Now come with me into the bedroom so I can see what we have in the rag basket." Mama turned to June, who watched with great interest. "Young lady, your papa told you to do something. Now you'd better get to it."

“Oops...I forgot.” June’s eyes widened and she ran from the room.

Margaret followed Mama into the bedroom. She held tight to Jeremiah with her good arm and kept the injured arm close to her chest. Mama sat in front of the rag basket and Margaret sat on the floor beside her.

Jeremiah crawled out of her lap and laid his head on Mama’s legs. He rubbed his eyes while chanting the name he called her, “Ma, Ma, Ma, Ma.” Finally, he slept.

Mama firmly tied strips of a discarded pillowcase around her arm. When the wound was properly covered, she went to work tearing rags into bandages, handing some to Margaret too. It goaded her to think the precious strips of cloth would soon be used to doctor the Yankee sailor.

“So how bad did he look?” Mama’s voice was soft as she glanced at Jeremiah.

Margaret squinted at the memory of what she’d seen. “He looked pretty bad to me, all bloody and shot up.”

Little June came into the room and wiped her brow. “Whew, that rifle is mighty heavy.” She brushed off her hands on her skirt. “Can I go see the Yankee, Mama?”

Mama tilted her head to look at her youngest daughter. “No, I need you to stay here with Jeremiah while I go with Papa and Margaret to see what we can do.”

“But, Mama, I ain’t never seen no Yankee before.” The little girl whined and puffed out her bottom lip.

“Oh, my goodness, is that proper English, young lady?”

“No, ma’am.”