

Chapter Seven

(Magnolia House, Alexandria, Louisiana, June 3rd)

Turning onto the driveway, Reese couldn't help but to admire the stands of magnolia trees that framed the roadway to the house. Moving closer to the American Greek Revival home, the branches of the trees began to part, revealing the magnificence of the four-columned, two-story structure. The approaching scene was indicative of a picture one might see in Southern Living magazine.

Laura sensed Reese's awe of the view as fond memories of her childhood flooded back to her. "Looks great don't you think? But as we get closer you'll notice she needs a little work," said Laura. "The roof needs to be redone, the exterior repainted, and maybe some updated landscaping, but it still strikes a pose."

"I'll say! I'm recalling some of the stories you told me about the property when we were in college, but seeing it firsthand, I now understand why you were so exuberant in your descriptions of it. Is this house on the national registry?"

"Yes, it was built in 1859 by Samuel Rubens, a doctor, who relocated from Connecticut. The story goes that he was a Republican supporter of Abraham Lincoln's bid for the White House. But with Lincoln running on a platform of banning slavery in all U.S. territories and the Southern states regarding it as a violation of their constitutional rights, he had mixed feelings about what would happen if Lincoln was elected. By the time of Lincoln's inaugural, Rubens had formed strong relationships with many of the important people of Alexandria. So, when the Southern states formed their Confederacy, he was caught between his personal beliefs on slavery and his love of Alexandria and its citizens. As it turned out, he volunteered to serve the South, but was himself severely wounded in the battle of Bull Run in Virginia and he returned home. As the War raged on, rumor had it that he had a change of heart about his Confederate beliefs and became part of the Underground Railroad in Louisiana. There were a few local naysayers who rumored he was a Northern sympathizer but, in 1864, part of the house was burnt by Union soldiers, and his friends rallied to his support. If he was involved with the Railroad, he effectively used his Confederate veteran status to keep his activities a secret."

"That's very interesting, Laura, but it's only a tale that makes an old grand house seem bigger than life, isn't it?"

"Not according to my grandmother. She always said she had mysterious feelings about the place. I remember when I was ten-years-old, she showed me evidence of a fire behind an attic door. She said when Dr. Rubens did the reconstruction on the home he left some of the destruction as a sign to

justify his fighting for the Confederacy, though he was at odds with them on the slavery issue.”

“Did your grandparents bother to look into any of these rumors? Check records, or look for other evidence?”

“No. I don’t believe they wanted to know.”