

*Gettysburg*  
*June 26, 1863*

“The Rebels are coming! The Rebels are coming!” Summer’s head twisted from side to side as she heard people cry out, then seek shelter behind shutters fastened with iron bars and doors bolted from the inside. She’d meant to step into the street from the general store located at the Diamond to return home. Although most merchandise had been sent away as protection against invasion, Emma had asked her to fetch whatever provisions might yet remain.

Summer found herself frozen in place by the onslaught, as townspeople scattered in all directions. She clung tightly to her market basket, her mind racing. It took but a few moments to realize how much danger she faced.

The Rebel attack came from the north end of town. The rumble of horse hooves mixed with gunfire and wild, hair-raising howls and screams met her ears. Spinning around, her eyes beheld Confederate infantrymen, some dressed in no more than rags, spill from dusty alleyways into the streets. Soldiers on horseback closed in, brandishing revolvers or firing indiscriminately, cursing in the language of the Devil himself.

The ransacking began, terrifying and unpredictable. Desperate men spread out to almost every building in sight, searching for anything they could lay their hands on – clothing, food, shoes, hats, whiskey, and especially horses. They confiscated whatever they came across.

Summer trembled with fear. *Where should I go? What should I do?* While she wasn’t far from her father’s law office, reaching him would require moving headlong toward the enemy. She envisioned the lawyers barricading themselves inside which, while providing protection against intruders, also eliminated any hope of refuge for her.

The general store’s shopkeeper hastily struggled to secure his property. His face flushed red with fright and determination. “Go home, girl!” he yelled, breaking her indecision. “Help your family protect your possessions. Your very lives may depend on it!”

Summer took his advice. She weaved her way through familiar alleyways, cautiously at first, then running as fast as she could when she spied her own backyard. Somehow, she held tight to her basket, unaware of that fact until she reached the porch.

Breathless, she stumbled up the stairs, the container banging against her legs. Her bonnet hung down her back, tethered precariously against her neck by satin ribbons. Strands of sopping wet hair stuck to her forehead and cheeks.

Emma stood in the back doorway, wringing her hands. Summer’s heart dropped.

“Oh my God, Summer, what took you so long to come home?”

Never had Summer heard her mother use the Lord’s name in such a way. While she was terrified of the Rebels, in that moment she was more afraid her mother had suddenly lost control of her senses.

“Is everyone all right?” Summer asked, panting.

Emma nodded and pulled her elder daughter inside. Summer slammed the door, relieved her mother’s faculties apparently were intact. She peered out a street-facing window.

“We need to secure the house,” Summer stated as calmly as she could. “The Rebels could be here any minute. They’re at the Diamond now.” She called upon Polly, Maddie, and Amanda to close the curtains and push furniture against the front door.

Their tasks complete, they gathered in the kitchen, their nerves frayed. “I don’t know what else we can do now, except wait,” Emma said somberly.

“What’s going to happen?” Polly asked. She started to cry.

Emma kissed the top of her head. “There may be a great clash of armies soon. The rumors have been circulating for months.”

“How much danger are we in?” Amanda asked.

“I don’t know,” Summer answered. “But Maddie, we must be prepared to hide you. There’s no telling what might happen if the Rebels find you.”

“Yes, that’s a certainty,” Emma agreed.

*Summer in Gettysburg* by Evelyn Landane - Excerpt

“Let’s pray the Rebels either will be gone soon or pass this house by,” Maddie replied nervously. Polly buried her head in her hands. “What about Father? Is he safe?”

A thought flashed into Summer’s head. Without a word, she flew up the stairs to the second floor and then up to the garret. Peeking outside from the northernmost window, she glimpsed the activities occurring near the direction of the Diamond. Cautiously, she stuck her head fully outside. It seemed the marauding had stopped, or at least slowed down, as it was quieter now.

She knew what she had to do.

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At the Diamond a Rebel band played southern tunes while above their heads, the traitors’ flag flapped in the afternoon breeze. Never in her life could Summer have imagined such a disheartening sight. Her courage momentarily deflated, she mustered her strength, determined to discover her father’s fate.

The uneasy peace still held. As Summer approached the law office, she was surprised to find its shutters, as well as the door, open wide. A grandfather clock, standing sentinel along a wall festooned with green wallpaper splattered with small gold eagles, struck the half-hour.

Looking inside, her eyes rested on two figures leaning over a large desk. She recognized one silhouette as that of Burton Small, who now required the assistance of a cane due to a recent riding accident. His leaning on one such instrument bolstered her spirit. She identified the man standing nearby.

“Father, are you all right?” she cried.

Mystified, he faced her. “Summer, why aren’t you at home? Haven’t you seen the Confederates are in charge of the town? You look every bit as disheveled as those heathens.”

Summer realized she hadn’t improved her appearance since leaving the general store, which seemed like ages ago now. “Mother was so worried I promised I’d see for myself you were safe.”

“And she agreed?”

She couldn’t lie to her father. “Not exactly. To be honest, I didn’t give her a chance to object.”

Burton glanced at the clock and frowned. “We have only a half hour to prepare our response.”

“You’re right,” Nathaniel replied gravely. “Summer, unless you can be useful here, I implore you to go home. The Rebels have made demands and all the town’s officials have left. In fact, the General has threatened to burn it all down if money and supplies are not produced.”

Summer’s mouth opened in astonishment.

“Mr. Small and I have taken it upon ourselves to provide answers or negotiate an acceptable outcome. The General will be back at four o’clock.”

“I can help you,” Summer pleaded. “Everyone’s safety depends on the fruits of your efforts.”

Nathaniel rested his chin on his hand, thinking. “All right,” he said, deciding. “We’ll need someone to memorialize the elements of the agreement, assuming we come to one, as Mr. Small’s injury makes such an effort difficult. I’ll look to you for that task. Are you prepared to make no mistakes?”

“I am,” Summer replied.

“Go freshen yourself and report back here. Paper and pens are in the secretary. We have but a few more minutes.”