

*from Chapter 32*

As the train sped through the unseen night, every mile it traveled took her closer to White River Junction where she would change trains for Saint Albans. Once in Saint Albans, she would have to get off and wait for the next train to Enosburg, which ran only twice a day, once in the morning and again in the afternoon. In all likelihood, she would wait for several hours in the Saint Albans depot, by herself, with no husband beside her, visibly pregnant, wondering how it had all gone so wrong.

She slept fitfully as she tried to imagine what her homecoming would be like, walking up Depot Street lugging her suitcase, only to find the once towering maple trees now twisted skeletons decaying on the ground, their bark scabrous, their brilliant foliage reduced to leaf mold. The Neale children would be scattered to the four winds, their mother having become too sick and downtrodden to care for them, the eldest boy now in prison. Sally the beagle would be dead, one day having mustered some misguided impulse to waddle off the porch, down the front walk, and into the street to be run over by one of the few cars driving down the street that morning. The Bergerons' hysterical terrier would be buried in their back yard, having hurled itself at last through the bay window in a spectacular shower of broken glass to die bleeding on the lawn.

Faby came awake the next day to the early morning sounds of other people, shifting in their berths, clearing their lungs with morning coughs, murmuring to travel companions above or below them. When she returned from breakfast, the porter had all of the berths tucked neatly away, and she took her seat, looking out the window to see how far they had come during the night. While she couldn't tell exactly where they were, the passing landscape was as familiar to her as her own name: faded red barns, muddy, snow-mottled fields, trees hung with hooded metal buckets. She was back in Vermont.