

Chapter 1

The Little Rebel

The morning sun peeped through a tall window in one of the big front bedrooms of the William Gordon home in Savannah, Georgia. It touched the eyes of the two little sisters sleeping in a high four-poster bed.

Daisy, who was not quite five, woke at once and sat up. She heard her mother talking in a low voice to the nurse.

“I hope the children sleep late,” she was saying. “We’ll never leave if I have to answer Daisy’s questions.”

Daisy slid out of bed and ran into the hall. She left seven-year-old Nellie still asleep.

“What questions will I ask?” she demanded.

“Oh, Daisy, are you up?” said Mrs. Gordon. “What an early bird you are! Come with me so we

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won't wake Nellie and baby Alice."

She led Daisy to her own room and closed the door. She tucked her into her own bed and sat beside her.

"Now, Daisy Dee, I'm going to tell you something very exciting," she began. "You know that General Sherman and his Yankees captured our city of Savannah last week, don't you?"

"Of course I do," answered Daisy. "I know all about our War between the States. I know that Papa is fighting for the Con-fed-er-a-cy—that's the South. I know that my three uncles, your brothers, Mamma, are fighting for Mr. Lincoln—that's the North. I know our soldiers are called Rebels and wear gray uniforms. The enemies wear blue uniforms. They are mean old Yankees and I hate them."

Daisy stopped to take a breath. Mrs. Gordon was sorry to learn that her middle-sized daughter knew so much about the war. She had tried to keep the war away from her little girls. "You were born just when the cruel war was beginning, dear," she said. "That was in 1860, and now it's 1865. Oh how I pray it may end soon!"

"I know some people say you're a Yankee, Mamma," said Daisy. "That makes me and Nellie awful mad. I tell them you're the rebelest Rebel in the South, even if Grandma and Grandpa Kinzie

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do live in Chicago. I tell them that when you married Papa that made you want to be a Rebel. That's so, isn't it, Mamma?"

"Of course, dear. Now let me tell my news," said Mrs. Gordon. "General Sherman has ordered all women and children out of Savannah. When he came to see us the other day . . ."

"Why did you let him, Mamma?" cried Daisy.

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“That’s why people think we’re Yankees. I wish I hadn’t eaten that old sugar he gave me and Nellie. But it was good and I never saw sugar before.”

“Now, Daisy, let me talk, dear,” said Mrs. Gordon. “When General Sherman was here I asked permission to go through his lines to visit our Southern soldiers. I wanted to see Papa. The general said I might and gave me a pass. I saw Papa last night.”

“You went right through the Yankee army? You saw Papa and we didn’t? That wasn’t fair,” cried Daisy. “Is he coming home right away? Tell me quick.”

“I will, Juliette, if you’ll just be quiet,” said Mrs. Gordon.

Daisy put her hand over her mouth and nodded. When Mamma called her by her real name she knew she must listen.

“Papa wants you and Nellie and baby Alice and me to go on a long visit to Chicago, to see Grandpa and Grandma Kinzie. We’ll go on a boat to New York and then a train from New York to Chicago. We are going today!”

Daisy couldn’t speak for a second. She had so many questions she didn’t know which to ask first. Just then the door opened and Nellie came in. She was still yawning but she quickly woke up at the

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news. When the nurse came in a minute later with two-year-old Alice in her arms, Nellie was almost as excited as Daisy.

“Weren’t you scared when you went right through the Yankee lines?” she asked. “Weren’t you afraid they might shoot you, Mamma?”

“No, dear. I couldn’t have gone North without seeing Papa. I wanted to be sure that his wound was healing,” Mrs. Gordon answered. “Now, Daisy, once Nurse has you ready to go, you must keep clean. Liza Hendry is washing your other dress now. Mose has gone to tell your Aunt Margaret, and I’m sure the children will all come back here with her. Then you and Nellie can tell them the news.”

Mose, Nurse and Liza Hendry were former slaves. Until 1863, when all the slaves were set free under the Emancipation Proclamation, the Gordon family had owned them, and they had to work as their servants. They had also taken care of Captain William Gordon, the children’s father, when he was a little boy.

Aunt Margaret Anderson’s family arrived almost at once. There were five Anderson children. The youngest, Randy and Sadie, were Nellie’s and Daisy’s best friends.

The Andersons had already had their meager

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breakfast. They waited in the parlor while the Gordons ate theirs. Nellie and Daisy went to eat their little bowls of mush. Madam Gordon, Papa's mother, was already at the table in her high-backed chair.

"You should have milk and sugar to eat with your mush," she said. "But all we have must go to our brave Southern soldiers, if the Yankees don't get it first. You gobbled up the sugar which that Yankee general gave you."

"Are you going to Chicago with us, Grandma?" Daisy suddenly asked.

"No, Juliette," said Grandma. "It would take more than an upstart Northern general like William Tecumseh Sherman to get me away from my home."

"But you think it best for us to go, don't you, Mother Gordon?" said Mamma in a worried voice.

"Whatever your husband thinks best is right, Eleanor," said the old lady. "The children need food. They can get very little here."

Suddenly Daisy began to sniff the air like a puppy. "Smell!" She slipped off her chair. "Come on, Nellie, Liza's cooking something special."

All seven cousins raced down into the kitchen in the cellar.

"You all mind me and come in on your toes,"

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whispered Liza Hendry, the cook. "Walk light now. I'm going to show you my cake. Don't any of you dance or cut up. Mind!"

One after the other they tiptoed across the wide kitchen to the big iron stove.

"You get right back of me, Miss Daisy, honey," whispered the old woman. "Now stop breathing, all of you."

She carefully opened the stove door. "There now, isn't that pretty?" she said proudly.

"What did you say it was, Liza Hendry?" whispered Nellie.

"A cake, Miss Nellie," said the cook. "It's got a whole egg in it and a cup of sugar! I unburied the sugar, and Mose, he picked up that egg."

"Is cake good to eat?" asked Daisy.

Liza Hendry threw up her hands over her head. "Just listen to you. Almost five years old and you don't know what a cake is," said Liza Hendry. "No wonder my family looks like plucked chickens. No biscuits, no butter, no cream, no cake, no nothing, because the Yankees came to Georgia."

"Liza Hendry, what does this mean?" said Mrs. Gordon sharply from the doorway. "Are you wasting sugar on a cake when our soldiers need every bit we can find a way to take to them? Where did you get it?"

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She carefully opened the stove door. “There now, isn’t that pretty?” she said proudly.

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Liza Hendry put her hands on her hips and her eyes flashed. "Don't you tell me anything about my kitchen, Miss Eleanor! I buried that sugar away from the Yankees. And I unburied that sugar for a teeny-weeny cake for my going-away family."

Mrs. Gordon had sudden tears in her eyes. She patted Liza Hendry on the shoulder.

The children looked at one another and ran back upstairs. "I know how mad Liza Hendry can get all of a sudden," Nellie said, "but I never heard her speak like that to a grownup."

Mrs. Gordon soon came up the stairs smiling and sent them all running errands for her up and downstairs and in and out of doors.

No one saw Daisy slip out of the house alone, heading for the playhouse.

The neighborhood playhouse was under the spreading branches of a giant pittosporum bush near a live oak tree. There were two little pretend rooms under the bush. Elizabeth, Daisy's doll, and Ophelia, Nellie's doll, were in one of the rooms.

She carried Ophelia carefully because Nellie was always so careful with her. But she gave Elizabeth's cracked face a big kiss and then tucked her carelessly under her arm.

As she started slowly back to the house, she realized that she would not see home again for a

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long time. From where she stood she could see her own bedroom window above a magnolia tree. Smoke was coming out of the chimneys of the three cabins in which Nurse, Liza Hendry, and Mose lived. Daisy walked to the small iron gate and had a good swing back and forth.

Then she hurried on to the house. She had a lump in her throat and tears in her eyes.

When she came into the hall she heard Randy Anderson talking to Nellie.

“Only Yankees eat like that,” he was saying. “But then I guess you all are Yankees now. At least Aunt Eleanor probably is. General Sherman came to see her.”

He could say no more. Daisy had butted him in the stomach. He doubled up. Then he sat down hard and tried to defend himself from her fists and feet.

“Take that back!” she shouted. “My mamma is the rebelest Rebel in the whole world and you know it, Jefferson Randolph Anderson! You know Mr. Yankee Sherman came to see her because he is friends with Grandpa Kinzie in Chicago. You know we hate Yankees!”

“My, my, what’s going on?” asked Liza Hendry, as she came panting up the stairs. “You know I don’t hold with fighting, Miss Daisy. Get yourself

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right up from there. Now we're goin' to eat the little cake. Miss Nellie, you're the smart one. You count and see how many pieces I'm going to need to cut. It ain't bigger than my hand, that cake ain't. Baby Alice wants a piece too."

Nellie was pleased. She counted everyone—six Andersons, four Gordons, Mose, Nurse and Liza Hendry herself.

Daisy nibbled a little bit off the top of hers and put the rest into her pocket. She always saved a bit of something she really liked for another time.

"There's the livery-stable carriage," called Nellie. "Oh, Mamma, we can't go in that! Look at that awful horse. You can see its ribs."

The Gordons and Andersons had given all the best horses to the Southern army long ago.

"Poor thing, it's just hungry!" said Daisy.

The whole group went down the walk together. Randy stuck close to Daisy's side.

"Don't get to liking Yankees, Daisy," he whispered.

"Of course I won't," answered Daisy. "Not unless I want to."

Mose soon had the few bags in the carriage. He helped the family into their seats—all but Daisy. Daisy was missing.

"She was feeding my horse something," said the

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old driver. "Here she comes now."

"I just gave him what was left of my cake," said Daisy, skipping up to the carriage. "He said 'thank you.' He told me that he gets mighty hungry now the Yankees have come to town."

The rickety old carriage started. No one looked back, but Daisy hung out as far as she could, looking forward.

"I'm going to be the first one to see the boat," she called to Mrs. Gordon.