

Prologue

Clark County, Indiana, Spring 1847

“Timothy, stop fighting right this minute!” Hannah Ahab dashed toward the barnyard where two boys scuffled and yelped. But when she pulled her six-year-old son off his nine-year-old cousin, she discovered the boys were laughing.

“What’s the meaning of this?”

“Aw, Ma ...” Timothy whined.

“We’re just having fun,” said Johnny. “Aunt Hannah, Timothy’s a tiger. Tall as me and almost as strong.”

Timothy grinned at the compliment.

“But we’re leaving shortly, and just look at you.” Hannah brushed dirt from his jacket. “Go clean up. Hurry.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

The two boys raced toward the house, and Hannah followed. Inside, she glanced around the bedroom she had shared with Cousin Willa through the winter. Now that she and Timothy would be traveling back East to Boston, she must be certain everything was packed in their trunk.

Pleasant memories warmed her heart as she recalled her relatives’ welcoming arms after she fled Nantucket Island following her husband’s death. Here, even the scrapes Timothy had with his cousin could not dishearten her, for they were far different from the very real fights he had encountered in Nantucket.

Many people there blamed Captain Ahab for the tragic loss of the whaling ship *Pequod*. Although only three years old when he last saw Ahab, Timothy was very much his father’s son. When cruel boys called Ahab a murderer, Timothy fought back fiercely to defend his father’s name.

But children’s brawls were not the main reason Hannah had left the island of her son’s birth. Rather, against community

expectations that every boy should go to sea by the age of ten, she refused to let him be a whaler. No matter how much she had loved Ahab, she would do everything in her power to prevent Timothy from following in his father's footsteps.

Hannah often dreamed of Ahab—handsome, brilliant, daring, wealthy beyond imagining. Had he ever found peace with God, or had he continued to blame Him for the loss of his leg in a whaling accident? Surely, with godly Mr. Starbuck as his first mate, he had come to see the futility of his bitterness.

For her part, she had ceased praying altogether. Why should she cry out to God? Had she not done so all during Ahab's last, fatal voyage, to no avail? Over the months since learning of his death, she recalled the night she renewed her trust in God, committing both her life and Ahab's into His care. But that was almost certainly the very night her husband died. If her heartfelt prayer meant nothing to God then, why should she believe He cared anything about her now?

Henceforth, Hannah would consult only her own heart in deciding how to live, and the time had come for her and her son to embark on a great adventure. All her life she had longed to travel, and after a short visit with friends in Boston, she and Timothy would sail to Europe and perhaps Egypt.

After one last glance around the farm, Hannah bade her relatives good-bye, gathered Timothy, and began the journey eastward by coach, ferries, and trains. Along the way, she devised a daring scheme to protect her son. She would take her cousins' last name so no one in the seafaring community would know of their relationship to the infamous whaling captain who had madly, vengefully pursued a great white whale, dragging all his crew, save one, to their deaths beneath the ocean waves.

Chapter One



Boston ahead, ma'am," the coach driver called down from his seat.

"At last." Hannah closed her volume of Shakespeare and gazed at her son sleeping soundly on the upholstered bench across from her. The sight of his black eyelashes against his tanned cheeks gave her heart a tug. He had nearly lost his baby looks, a good thing in light of his unusual height, but she would miss that cherubic phase.

She leaned forward and shook him gently. "Darling, we're almost there. Come look out the window."

Timothy rubbed his eyes and sat up with a smile before he was fully awake. Again Hannah's heart tugged. He had been such a happy baby, but after Ahab's death, he often wore a dark frown reminiscent of his father. After their Indiana visit, he once again wore a peaceful expression.

Now awake, he climbed on Hannah's lap. "Are we there yet? Are we at Uncle Jeremiah's?"

Hannah laughed. He had asked the question for the last two weeks of their trip. "No. Just another hour or so. Mr. Jones will ask directions to the mission. Let's look out and see the city."

She pulled the cord on the window shade to roll up its thick oilcloth. "Oh, it's bright outside. Do you think we'll remember how to walk after all these weeks of travel?"

Timothy gave her a look indicating the silliness of the question, then asked, "Do you think Aunt Ker ... Keren ... Ker ..."

"Kerenhappuch."

“Do you think Aunt Kerenhappuch is a good cook like Aunt Willa? Are you sure all my Boston cousins are girls? How long are we staying at the mission? What’s our ship’s name? When does it sail?”

Hannah laughed. “I’m sure the food will be fine. You don’t remember, but Aunt Kerenhappuch was your nursemaid from the moment you were born until you were a year and a half old. She’ll be so happy to see you again, and so will Uncle Jeremiah. All their children are girls, but not really our cousins. They’re good friends, and you may call them Aunt and Uncle, not Reverend and Mrs. Harris. We’ll stay with them while we plan our trip, and I don’t know the ship’s name yet.”

As she finished her answers, happiness swept through her. At last her lifelong dream of traveling abroad would come true. From Timothy’s infancy, she had read him travelogues hoping he would share the dream, and indeed he seemed eager to go.

They needed this trip, both of them. By the time they returned, any stories the *Pequod* survivor might have spread about Ahab would be forgotten, replaced by some other scandal. Her son would never have to bear the disgrace of his father’s actions. Now she must prepare him for their new identities.

“We’re going to play a new game.”

His eyes twinkled, and once again his resemblance to his father moved Hannah. When Ahab had been happy, before he lost his leg, at the first, when they had fallen in love, oh, he had been magnificent. And when their son was born, Ahab’s eyes had twinkled when he looked at her, just as that son’s eyes now shone. How could she take away the pride her son should feel in his father, no matter how unwisely Ahab had behaved after his accident? But that unwise behavior now made it necessary.

“What’s the game?”

“We’re going to pretend. You know, just as when you and Johnny pretended to be soldiers.”

"Can I ... I mean ... may I be the general?"

"Oh, we'll play soldiers later. This is a special game. We'll pretend to have a different last name, but not completely different."

A cloud seemed to pass over his eyes. "What name? Jacobs, like Mr. Jones keeps calling us?"

Not one to tell lies, Hannah pursed her lips. "Yes. We're going to call it our Indiana name, like our cousins. And since it's your own middle name too, it means you'll still be called Timothy Jacob, only with an s on the end."

"You mean we won't be Ahabs anymore?"

She winced at the double meaning of his words. No, through no fault of their own, they were not Ahab's family anymore. "No. Our name won't be Ahab now."

He stared out the window, frowning. Hannah's heart twisted. Was she making a terrible mistake?

He looked back at her sharply, again the picture of his father. "That's why the driver calls you Mrs. Jacobs?"

"Yes, even Mr. Jones is playing the game."

"Will everyone play it with us?"

"Everyone will play with us. But most people won't know it's a game."

He seemed doubtful. "So we have to see how many people we can fool?"

Again, she winced. Was she teaching her son to lie?

"It's not really fooling them, darling. It's more like playing hide-and-seek with words."

"Does that mean we want them to guess our name?"

Hannah could no longer meet his troubled gaze. "No. It's our secret."

He nodded his acceptance, then slipped off her lap and knelt at the low window. After a few moments, he spoke in a dark, troubled

tone. "Boston is awful big. I hope Mr. Jones can find the way to the mission."

Thirteen years had passed since Hannah attended Miss Applegate's boarding school. More than ever, Boston teemed with life, as did most of New England's coastal cities. Thousands of European immigrants came to America every month for opportunities unknown in their own countries. As the carriage wended its way toward Jeremiah's mission in the North End, Hannah could discern Portuguese, French, and German being spoken on the streets. Regretting her lack of attention to language studies, she longed to understand them, yet they pleasantly foreshadowed her upcoming trip.

Soon Mr. Jones found the Grace Seamen's Mission on North Square, not far from the docks. The large, five-story clapboard building was painted a light, sunny yellow with white trim. Six gabled windows graced the top floor, and a cupola sat high atop the roof. Next to the building stood the Grace Mission Chapel, its charming architecture reminding Hannah of the Seamen's Bethel in New Bedford, where she and Ahab had said their marriage vows.

On the far side of the chapel stood a three-story clapboard house, also painted yellow and white. Dark green shutters adorned the windows, and lacy curtains were visible through the glass. The large, pretty house suited a young minister and his growing family, although Hannah felt some concern about his choice of neighborhoods in which to build.

Mr. Jones reined in his team of horses, jumped down from the driver's seat, and walked up the front doorsteps to announce their arrival. Soon Jeremiah and Kerenhappuch Harris came out the door, flanked by two little girls, the third daughter in her mother's arms.

"Jeremiah!" Hannah flung open the carriage door.

“Hannah, dear Hannah.” Jeremiah came to the carriage to help her down, then pulled her into his strong arms. His sandy brown hair was tousled, his rolled-up shirtsleeves were ruffled, but his face beamed with joy. “Oh, how good to see you. And who is this fine young gentleman?” He released her and reached out to shake hands with the suddenly shy Timothy, who still stood in the carriage door. Jeremiah pulled back his hand and bowed. “Master Timothy.”

Kerenhappuch held no such concerns. After embracing Hannah with one arm, she deposited her toddler in her guest’s hands and pulled her former charge from the carriage. “Come here, my little man. Let me see how thou hast grown. Oh, how thou favorest thy father. Every inch as handsome as the captain too.” Without waiting for his response, she set him down and reclaimed her youngest daughter. With the back of his sleeve, Timothy wiped his cheek where she had kissed him, but he also grinned.

“Mrs. Jacobs, shall I carry the trunk into the house?” Mr. Jones said.

“Mrs ... ?” Jeremiah began.

Hannah gripped his arm. “Yes, Mr. Jones, if you could please. Jeremiah, could you direct Mr. Jones to my room?”

Jeremiah stared at her for a moment, then turned back to the other man. “Up the stairs to the second floor, if you please. The second door on the left. Dorice will show you.” He nodded toward the serving girl waiting by the front door. Spying a young seaman who had just emerged from the mission, he called out, “Mr. Callahan, would you be so kind as to help the coachman?”

While Jones and Callahan lifted the trunk down from the coach and carried it into the house, Jeremiah swept his family and guests up the front stairs, through the front door, and into the great parlor. Once Hannah had settled into an overstuffed chair, one considerably softer than the thinly cushioned coach seat, Jeremiah confronted her.

“What’s the meaning of this, Hannah? Have you gone and married again without my examining the credentials of your intended?” His tone was that of a teasing brother, but his eyes revealed his concern.

“No, not married, just ...” Hannah glanced toward the children.

Jeremiah traded looks with Kerenhappuch, who quickly sent the children to the kitchen for cookies with their young nursemaid Ellen. At the door, Timothy turned back with a glower, but the two girls grabbed his hands and dragged him away.

Once they left, the couple turned to Hannah. She stared down at her hands, busied herself removing her black kidskin gloves, and wondered how to begin. She might have more trouble explaining her lie to Jeremiah than to Timothy, for the discerning young minister had known her since childhood.

“It was very difficult for us in Nantucket after word got back about Ahab.” She twisted her gloves in knots. “I just couldn’t bear for Timothy to face any more ridicule for what ... for what ...” Hannah’s eyes filled with tears. How could she expect them to approve of her lying?

Kerenhappuch sat on the arm of Hannah’s chair and embraced her. “Dearest Hannah, how our hearts have ached for thee. That whaler’s tale spread to every tavern on the waterfront and of course here to the mission. It caused us great concern. Then Mother wrote of thy departure from Nantucket and thy trip out West. Thy letter this past winter brought us great relief.”

“But to take a different name ...” Jeremiah leaned toward her, pastoral concern radiating from his intense blue eyes. “I fear this sets a bad example for Timothy even as you try to shelter him. Perhaps we can find another way to protect him from stories about his father.”

Kerenhappuch squeezed Hannah’s shoulders. “Husband, thou knowest that I do not condone a lie, but can a person not change her

name without censure? The Scriptures tell us Saul changed his name to Paul after his conversion.”

“This is hardly the same. I’m concerned—”

“Shh, don’t distress her further.” Kerenhappuch hugged Hannah again.

“He isn’t. I’m just exhausted from the trip, and it’s such a relief to be with dear friends.” She pulled a handkerchief from her sleeve and dabbed her nose. “Is using my relatives’ name so terrible?”

Jeremiah shook his head. “I cannot fully approve, but until we think of another way to protect Timothy, what else can *you* do?” He chuckled softly. “When I went out West ten years ago, I met many men who had taken on new identities because of past misdeeds. I don’t mean to compare you to them, but I understand your feelings.”

Kerenhappuch nodded. “Hannah, thou must not give it another thought. No one here knows thee, and we will keep thy secret.”

Jeremiah nodded as well. “You can count on us. After all, we owe all our happiness to you.”

Despite the comfort of her down-filled bed, Hannah slept fitfully that night. The sea air blew renewed dreams of Ahab through her open window. He strode up a cobblestone street from the New Bedford docks, his two long, powerful legs bringing him home. He lifted her up in his arms and swung her around as they both laughed. He lowered her to their marriage bed and showed her how happy he was to be home. Then he stood, turned from her, and limped away toward the Nantucket harbor on his ivory leg. *Ahab!* She tried to call out to him, but no words would come. Then he was gone. She awoke in a sweat, aching for his loving touch.

She arose, went to the window, and stared out at the sky. These nightly visions had not tormented her for several months, for her hard work on the farm had exhausted her and brought on dreamless

sleep. Perhaps to chase away useless longings, she should find something to occupy her time in Boston until her trip was arranged. In the morning, she would ask Kerenhappuch—Kerry, she corrected herself—for some useful work at the mission.

Kerry's Quaker upbringing had prepared her to participate as a full partner in her husband's work. Thinking back, Hannah recalled that Ahab had been captain of both his ship and his marriage. As much as she had loved him, she could not help but admire Jeremiah for seeking Kerry's counsel. The moment she thought it, she felt disloyal to Ahab. He had been a good husband and father, at least as good as he knew how to be.

After breakfast, Jeremiah invited Timothy to the mission. "You can meet some new friends and learn about our work."

Timothy turned an eager, questioning face to his mother. "Can I ... may I, Mother?"

Hannah mirrored his expression, pursing her lips as she teased. "I don't know, darling. Should you disappoint the girls? They want you to play house."

He wrinkled his nose, sighing his disappointment.

"Hannah," Kerry said, "the girls have their sewing lessons with me this morning. We won't require Master Timothy's presence until later, will we, girls?"

The two older girls nodded their heads agreeably, and the boy looked hopefully at his mother.

"Of course you may go. I'm coming over too, as soon as I help Aunt Kerry."

Timothy rewarded her with a beaming smile.

After he and Jeremiah left, a vague uneasiness nagged Hannah. "Kerry, what kinds of men usually stay at the mission?"

"Do not worry thyself, Hannah. Jeremiah seems mild mannered, but he's firmly in charge of all the doings at the mission. And he has several good men working with him. One of them lives on the

top floor with his wife and children. Timothy will be happy to see that they have boys for him to play with.”

“Ah, how wonderful. He’s been agreeable with the girls, but he’s grown used to playing with his boy cousin. I’m also grateful for Jeremiah’s influence on him.”

“And Jeremiah will appreciate having a boy in the house for these few weeks. Though he would never say anything, I’m hoping this next baby will be the son I know he wants.”

“Kerry, are you expecting again?” With closer study, Hannah could discern Kerry’s expanded waistline beneath her morning gown.

The younger woman smiled. “Sometime in November. Isn’t it wonderful the way God has blessed our little family?”

Hannah still felt stunned by the news as later that morning she carried a basket of homemade sweet rolls up the block toward the mission. Kerry had plenty of help for her household, but how long would her health hold up if she continued to have a baby every year? But then, Hannah could hardly rebuke Jeremiah when Kerry seemed so happy. Not only that, but she herself longed for another child, especially a daughter. What fun it had been to brush Lacy’s and Molly’s long blonde curls this morning, and how wonderful it had been to hold little Daisy in her arms. With a sigh for herself and an inward wish for Kerry’s health, she rejoiced for her friends’ quiver full of children and happiness.

She paused to study the outside of the mission building. The narrow flowerbeds along the front and sides gave the property a homey look, while the elegant Georgian pediment and double front door suggested a grand hotel. Jeremiah must have used much of his inheritance from his late father to give the mission its welcoming appearance. Seamen who might be put off by a more austere building would have no excuses for wasting their pay in tawdry waterfront bars when they could find rest and diversion at this attractive haven.

Climbing the three front steps, she put her hand out to the door just as Timothy flung it open.

"I'm already helping Uncle Jeremiah. May I take the basket to the kitchen?"

"Of course." She handed it to him and followed him through the front hall into a large, sunny dining room, where blended smells of bread, bacon, and pipe tobacco greeted them.

Several men sat at breakfast served by the mission staff. At the end of the long room, Jeremiah stood talking with another man who, like his host, wore a dark business suit. The tastefully groomed stranger was tall and muscular, with neatly trimmed, sun-bleached blonde hair. He was clean-shaven and had the tanned, weathered complexion of a seaman. He appeared to be in his late-thirties, perhaps five years older than his host.

When Jeremiah saw Hannah, he led the other man to her. As they approached, she felt a rush of panic, despite Jeremiah's tranquil expression. She knew this man and, far worse, he knew her. It was too late to flee. Soon every sailor and whaler in the room and every seaman in Boston would know her name.

"Hannah, here's an old friend I'm sure you remember."

The man took her hand, raised it to his lips, then lifted his gaze to her stricken countenance. "Mrs. ... Jacobs, how good to see you again. I've already become reacquainted with your fine young son." His broad, handsome face was lit by a guileless smile, and his clear gray eyes exuded kindness and understanding.

Tears stung her eyes as she struggled to regain her composure. "Captain Lazarus, how good to see you again."