

Part II Chapter 15 Names

Tom and Dolly had spent the day hauling dry-goods to and from a warehouse at 213 Pearl Street. Something was wrong with Dolly. She wanted to stop often and rest; there was a wild look in her eyes; she was breathing heavily. Wasn't that milk dripping from her teats? He hoped her time hadn't



come already. Instead of taking another load from the warehouse, he headed instead toward the stable. Dolly picked up her pace.

“Uncle Tom,” Nell was running toward him as he rounded the corner from Williams Street. “Come home quick! They sent me to fetch you. Aunt Bridget is having her baby!”

“Oh, no, no. Tell her to wait.” Tom wanted to run home with her, but what about Dolly? —“I’ll be right along, Nell. Run back and see how she’s doing, and come tell me. I’ve got to tend to Dolly.” Nell ran back home, and Tom hurried to get Dolly into the stable. He could give her a quick rub down and feed and water her, then get home to his wife’s side.

Once in the stable, Dolly didn’t want her feed, although it had been hours since she last ate. He washed her thoroughly, and put down fresh straw for the night. She began turning around her stall, pawing the floor, moaning, then suddenly sank down and began groaning. Tom was terrified. “Oh, Dolly, not now, please, don’t have your foal now.” Dolly, however; was going to deliver her foal as soon as she could, and he could either stand there and watch or he could help, if he knew anything about it, which he didn’t, he thought..

Suddenly her water broke and she rolled over on her side, groaning. “Don’t die, Dolly!” He watched horrified as powerful contractions seized her, and she counteracted them by struggling and pushing, pushing, pushing out something white and smooth--a sac it looked like, thin and clear--and through the film he could see one tiny front hoof, and then another. “Oh, Dolly, there’s a hoof coming ,” he told her. “And there’s another. And there’s a nose—and the head with a white blaze!” He gave her a play by play description, as if he were the midwife. At that point, Dolly seemed to pause and looked up at him as if asking him for help. “Is it stuck?” He grabbed one of the foal’s front feet and pulled it, and the shoulders popped out. Dolly paused again, as if gathering her strength for the final expulsion, when the hindquarters of the foal came sliding out. “Dolly, you’ve done it!” he praised her.

He was ecstatic. He felt almost like a father; he wanted to stay to see Dolly through whatever happened next, but he remembered Bridget, at home, going through the same struggle without him. “Wait here, Dolly. I’ll be right back!”

“Push again,” the midwife was saying. Bridget, bathed in sweat, had been pushing for hours and was now utterly exhausted. The room was stifling—not even a breath of air came through the one window at the back. Betty bathed her face, neck and shoulders. “Easy, Bridget. Relax. Let the baby help you. It wants to be born.” Bridget clutched Betty’s hand tighter. The sweat was running into her eyes. She clung with her other hand to the bed frame. She was groaning though her teeth were clenched on a . “Please, God, let the baby come,” Betty prayed. Bridget redoubled her grip on Betty, clenched her teeth harder, and pushed with all her strength. Again she pushed, and again.

“It’s crowning!” exclaimed the midwife. A tiny head was appearing. “Again, Bridget.” Bridget gave another push. The shoulders emerged. A final great push and the baby slid out in a filmy gush, into the hands and towels of the midwife, followed by the afterbirth, which the midwife caught in a towel. “Oh, Bridget. It’s a girl!” Betty cried. Too exhausted even to look or hear the faint cry of her daughter, Bridget fell asleep.

It was at this point that Tom came running in and found his wife sleeping with a shining baby, rinsed and cleaned, resting on her breast. Tom was amazed. She had done this all by herself. He had helped Dolly with her foal, but Bridget managed with only Betty and the midwife to help her. Sorry that he hadn’t been there, he wondered what difference he would have made. Bridget had done it without him. He looked at his child— He had looked forward to a son and saw it was a girl. He wasn’t in the least disappointed.

He sat beside his wife on the bed, stroking her hair. All this fatherhood at once, and he barely 24. Wait until he wrote home to tell them. Then back he ran to the stable, where he saw that Dolly had cleaned her foal who looked startled to see him. Dolly nodded her head at him with a look that told him she was glad it was over, she was ready to eat, and wasn’t her son beautiful? Tom obligingly fed her, cleaned up the mess, adding fresh straw, stroked the foal’s white blaze, watched it gather it’s hooves under it and stand unsteadily then find the milky teat. Only then did he feel free to return to his wife and daughter, where he saw that Bridget was calmly nursing their child, as if she had known all along that it would be exactly this way for her.



The next few days Tom was in a daze, running between the stable and the bedroom, trying to be of help to both Dolly and Bridget. He thought of calling the foal Danny, after Daniel O’Connell, but that name was reserved for his son. He also couldn’t decide either what to name their daughter. Bridget was leaving it up to him. It should be a strong name--

Bridget was up and about, but Betty and Nell still did most of the work, hauling water for cooking and laundry, emptying, cooking meals for them—all things Thomas knew nothing about. “Let Bridget rest a few days,” Betty said. “Her job is just beginning. She’ll not be resting for a long time now.”

When Tom decided he had given Dolly enough rest and needed to get her back to work, he saw that Dolly would not be separated from the foal. She wanted to stop and nurse him, whenever he wanted. The foal nursed as Tom loaded the cart with goods at the warehouse, then whenever they stopped. He let the foal tag along, and worried that his spindly legs would slip in the muck of the streets, littered with garbage, manure, slop that pigs scavenged. Dolly was used to traffic-- other horses, omnibuses, people in a hurry, but the foal shied away and sheltered against her. Whenever they stopped, the foal thought it was a chance to nurse, but Tom pushed him away. “Gitty up! Let him nurse when I unload the cart,” he told her. He had to set a pace, or they wouldn’t get any work done. He was exasperated with the pair of them. This could go on for four to six months! He laughingly asked at the stable where he could find a wet nurse mare. They laughed back at him “Maybe your own horse could be the wet nurse for some fancy race horse; who would nurse a cartman’s foal?”

“What name have you chosen for her, Tom? We can’t keep calling her Baby Girl!” Bridget had been asking him this for weeks, but he still hadn’t decided. “Maybe we could call her Rosana,” her mother’s name. She was eager for the christening, so that Baby Girl could appear in her christening gown. Finally, after Mass on a Sunday in late September, they took Baby Girl up to the baptismal font, followed by Betty and Tim as godparents, and little Nell along as a “witness,” and asked the priest who was just finishing Mass to baptize her. As he poured the water over her head, saying, “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, I baptize thee----” He paused, looked up, so that they could remind him of the name. Bridget was on the point of saying “Rosana,” when Thomas finally announced, “Helena.” It was his mother’s name.

Helena had blue eyes like both her parents, reddish gold curls, a round smiling face. Thomas wanted to take her after Mass to Michael’s, but Bridget refused to even go in that neighborhood; rather, she wanted to show her to Mrs. Daly and the servants at the Daly’s. That afternoon, about four, she arrived with Helena, still resplendent in her christening dress, at No. 3 Washington Square North. Entering through the basement servants’ door, she was welcomed by Mary the cook, Ellen the maid, even Mr. Ruggles and several new servants whom she didn’t know. Ellen told her that Mrs. Daly had guests, but would tell her privately that Bridget was waiting in the servants’ quarters to show her the new baby. She returned with word to meet Mrs. Daly in the nursery.

Bridget went up by the back steps and arrived before Mrs. Daly could manage to leave her guests. Nurse and Bessie were there with Willie, now almost five

months. Bridget showed Helena first to Nurse, who looked politely at the sleeping child, nodded once, then returned to her seat so that she could keep an eye on Mrs. Daly. Bridget was made to understand that she was clearly going over the line. Bridget showed her baby to Bessie, who looked at her happily, "Oh, Miss Bridget, she's so beautiful! You're so fortunate." Then lowering her voice to a whisper, she pleaded, "Have you heard anything about my baby?"

Bridget hadn't been able to bring herself to tell Bessie what Mrs. Green had told her several months ago, that her own baby had "failed to thrive." Now how could she, in the face of her own evident good fortune, give her such bad news? "Bessie. . ." She shook her head. "Bessie, I wish I could tell you some good news, but I'm afraid . . ."

Bessie understood and turned her eyes down toward Willie and began to weep. "Now I have nothing left."

"Mrs. Green said that after you leave Willie, you'll return to the Magdalens to learn to be a laundress. They'll find you work in a good home. Life isn't over, Bessie. You're very young. You'll meet someone else and have more children." Bessie shook her head. "There's nothing for me now."

When Mrs. Daly came in, Bridget moved away so that Mrs. Daly couldn't see she that had Bessie had been whispering. Mrs. Daly looked hungrily at Willie—Perhaps that's why she asked me to meet her here, Bridget thought--then turned to look at Helena. "Oh, she's beautiful, Bridget. I wish I could stay and talk, but Mother is here, and I mustn't be gone long." Then she whispered, "What is it like, Bridget? To have complete say over your daughter?" She clearly wanted to linger for the answer, but nervously said, "I must go. Mother will be upset. Oh, I'll stop by on one of my afternoon rides so we can talk. Tell Cook to give you tea before you leave."

Cook was only too happy to stop for a chat while Bridget found a private area of the servants' quarters to nurse Helena while she had her tea. "Well, Bridget, you've done all right for yourself, with a beautiful baby—And what a beautiful dress you've made for her. I can tell you Mrs. Daly hasn't found another seamstress like you—She keeps 'em a few weeks, then lets 'em go. Her husband does the hiring, then she does the firing. If there's a way you could come back to work for her, I know she'd be content." She wanted to continue but Bridget didn't like to gossip about Mrs. Daly, so closed up her blouse, thanked Cook and left.

That evening they celebrated with a special dinner, feasting and toasting the new arrival over Bridget's dog rose table cloth, which had finally been spread out for an event worthy of celebration. Tom told again the story of how he had to oversee two births in one night, and Bridget added that on account of his love for Dolly, he'd had to miss the birth of Helena. Michael said that was like Tom—he

was always the last to come aboard, “But you’ll agree that I do make it in me own time.”

Tom was finding work with a lactating mare and a tagalong nursing foal was getting more and more impossible. Dolly clearly liked and wanted to please him, but she couldn’t do all he expected of her while she was worried about her foal straggling along after her. She was losing weight and appeared nervous and under a lot of stress. Her initial skittishness with crowds had returned. The foal was suffering too, was easily startled and fearful. Tom had to spend a lot more time pulling out of the traffic to calm them both down, allowing Dolly to attend to the foal’s needs, before she was willing to resume pulling the cart. Perhaps Dolly wasn’t getting enough to eat? Some of the other men at the stable looked at her and said, “That mare doesn’t want to work, Tom. Let her rest for a month. Put her out to pasture for a bit.” How could he stop working her? They had to keep working. He asked the stable owner to double her hay and feed.

“You’re already a month behind, and now that there’s the pair of them and she’s doubling her eating too, I’ll have to raise your board to a dollar and a half a week,.”

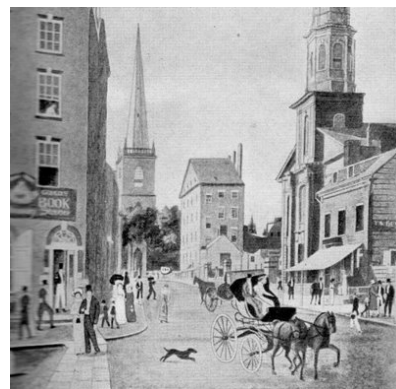
“That’s more than I pay myself in rent,” Tom protested.

“Then you’ll have to take her someplace else. You can’t expect me to carry you and double her food!”



Tom worked it out with Tim that he could keep put up a shed next to the outhouse behind the building. This was the perfect arrangement for Dolly and the foal. Why hadn’t he thought of that before? In return for this favor, Tom made some other building improvements for Tim.

Mrs. Daly arrived for a longer visit one fine October afternoon and offered to take Bridget and Helena for a ride in the carriage. Nurse was with her, looking after Willie, so there would be no opportunity for a private talk, but Bridget was thrilled at the opportunity to relax and see the city from the viewpoint of a carriage. They drove over Fulton to Pearl, and down Pearl to Wall Street, then headed back to Broadway and down Broadway to Bowling Green, where they descended and walked about on the green, strolling across to the Battery and down to the waterfront, where they gazed at the ships before



heading back to the carriage for the return trip.



Bridget could tell him that night that she had finally seen the view that carried him away so on July 4. “You’ve done a fine thing in bringing us here, Tom, and your daughter will thank you for it some day.”

In late October, there were more troubles for Tim, who began to be agitated about the fall elections. “Something’s got to be done,” he told Tom. “I’m a Democrat, but I don’t go along with Jackson on his ideas this time.” Tom figured out that it had something to do with the banks, that the President was attacking the idea of a national bank as a bastion of big money and centralized private power. “Does it sound like a good idea to you—to go against the central bank?” Tom had no money in any bank, so it didn’t matter to him, but Tim had been saving for five years, he said, and it mattered to him that his money be safe. “I’m going to vote with the Whigs on this one,” Tim said, which didn’t mean much to Tom, who hadn’t gotten used to the idea of voting, having never voted in Ireland. Nevertheless, he knew which side he’d be on. It was Jackson the egalitarian who had done away with the licensing requirement for cartmen. “That’s what I’ll call him—Jackson!”