

## Part II Chapter 38 His Name Is John

“It won’t be long now, Lena.” Bridget was preparing her daughter for the birth of the latest child. She had taken this pregnancy as an opportunity to explain to Lena the facts of life. A new baby was now growing in her stomach and Papa had put it there. She hadn’t told her exactly how Papa had done that, but just enough to intrigue her. Now she could see her mother’s belly expanding until it seemed large enough to pop. She prayed it wouldn’t hurt Mama. How would the baby get out? She couldn’t wait to see it happen. .

But Bridget had other plans. “I need you to look after the children during Mama’s hours of confinement,” she told Lena. “If the baby comes while you’re at school, Peggy will send for the midwife and look after the children, but if you’re home you can take charge of them. Take them up to Mr. Reynolds and play games or read to them, or--- hold class.” Mr. Reynolds was growing increasingly deaf and their noise could not disturb him.

Bridget’s labor pains began the Saturday after Easter. Papa had already gone to work, so Lena sent for Peggy, then charged Daniel with looking after little Jimmy. Will was nowhere to be found. The parade of the children, with Lena holding a twin by each hand, was heading up the steps when Peggy arrived, followed by the midwife. She and Daniel played hide and seek with the smaller children in Mr. Reynolds rooms, then as she realized it was taking a really long time for the baby to come, she told them to quiet down while she read them a favorite fairy tale--Little Red Cap-- again, with Daniel reading many of the parts.

Finally, Peggy summoned them to come back down, and when they entered the bedroom, Mama was sitting in bed with a big new baby at her breast. “He’s a whopper!” Daniel exclaimed. He was the largest baby any of them had seen. Even Mama was surprised at his size. “He is a whopper, isn’t he!”

“Another Chieftain,” Lena sighed. She had hoped for another girl. They wanted to know his name, but Mama said they must wait until Papa came home and gave his opinion.



“He looks like my uncle John. John--the beloved disciple. His Name is John.” Papa had spoken.

Bridget thought there were enough Johns already. “Such a popular name. Couldn’t he have a middle name? John--?” She looked at Lena, who was wriggling in eagerness to make a suggestion.

“Adams, Mama. The president of the United States after Washington. John Adams!” History was one of Lena’s principal interests, along with geography.

John Adams it was. Baby John would be added to Lena's charges. She had named him, after all.

When Bridget announced in June that it was time to have John Adams baptized, she asked Tom to spruce up the horse and wagon before the big day. "And maybe you could take the older boys with you."

Will and Daniel were elated as they accompanied Jackson to the stable, where they could find curry brushes, sponges, pails, combs. Tom found a hitching post out in the gravel yard and showed them how to tie the horse with a long tether. Then he gave each boy a curry brush and led them around the horse, gently scraping its coat, letting them help as high as they could reach, loosening any dirt or grit that had become imbedded in his coat as he had walked the streets all winter. "See, we've got to get at deep, hard-to-remove grit on his legs and flanks.

Will threw some water at the horse immediately, causing the horse to buck. "He doesn't like water." Tom made him stand back and watch as Dan finished grooming the hindquarters.

After the currying, the soaking began. Tom began by gently sponging his feet and forelegs, introducing him to the feel of water. Gradually he moved around the horse, calming him before he let the boys take sponges to wet small areas at a time. Tom did the higher parts of the horse—the back, the ears, and lastly the face. After Jackson was thoroughly soaked and calm—licking and chewing, a sign he was relaxed—Tom tied him up on a short lead, so they could begin brushing in the soap. He told them to brush in the soap a small area at a time, working up a lather. By this time the boys were thoroughly soaked and lathered themselves. Tom let them continue but when he saw that they were using most of the soapy water to throw at each other, he sent them off so he could finish the soaping.

"We must be sure not to leave any soap because it will dry and irritate his skin." He then began gently combing the mane and tail. Will sulked that he could not use the comb, but Tom didn't trust him near the tail, for fear Jackson, who could recognize mischief, would launch out at him. Rinsing Jackson with bucket after bucket until all the soap was thoroughly rinsed out was a job he enjoyed himself, the perfect job for a sunny June afternoon.

Tom let the boys towel him a bit to dry him off. After a final toweling of his head, Jackson stood, his chestnut coat and white blaze gleaming, and pawed the ground as if to say, "Don't I look splendid!"

They started home and Tom handed the boys the lead. Dan took it eagerly. He had watched his father closely and held the lead in his right hand, winding the end loosely in his left. At his father's nod, the boy cued Jack with a slight forward

movement of his right hand and began to move forward, saying “Come.” The horse actually followed his lead.

After watching his younger brother, Will grabbed the lead from him, but Jackson snorted and raised his head in protest.

“Be gentle with him, Will.”

Will could not persuade the horse to move forward when he had the lead, so rather than let a fight start between the brothers, Tom took the lead again. “Watch how I ask him to stop,” he told them, but Will wasn’t listening. It was a good thing that he had two older sons to teach, Tom thought. At least one will do it right.

Bridget’s plans for the christening day included visiting with the Leary’s, to show them the new baby and stopping at the Daly’s later in the day to show her the newborn. Mrs. Daly loved babies. Bridget looked forward to a visit for herself, and hoped to take the other children as well, offer tea to tempt them. None of the children, however, wanted to go with her. They wanted to stay and play at the Learys, which meant playing in the streets. “It’s boring at the Dalys,” Will complained.

“Lena,” Bridget appealed, “you’ve always loved going there. Don’t you want to know what Will is learning?” So far Lena had been keeping up with Will, who was privately tutored.

“Will always learns things we’re not. He’s studying Latin! The last time I was there he was talking about how Roman families lived and myths—things I’ve never heard of.”

“He’s sharing with you. He knows you also love school. You can learn from him.”

“It makes me sad not to be learning about all that he is--daily life in Rome or Pompeii.”

“You know your father once studied Latin, Lena.”

This was news to Lena. “Could he teach it to me?”

When Tom returned from the stable, Bridget asked him whether he remembered any Latin.

“It’s been twenty years, Bridge.”

“Lena wants to study it. Will is talking about things she has no chance of learning. It would give her a little confidence if she knew a bit of Latin herself.”

He agreed that if they could find a book, he could go through some vocabulary and conjugations and declensions with her.

The baby was christened John Adams, and after Mass the family piled into the wagon behind Jackson and set off for the Learys, where it was agreed that the children could stay at the Learys and play, in Papa’s care. That meant Betty’s, Bridget knew, as Tom would be sure to forget his duty once he and Tim got talking. After introducing the new baby and having Dan tell them again that “It’s a whopper!” they dined together and later, while James and the twins slept, Lena went with her mother and the newborn to the Dalys, where Lena was eager to tell Will that she would be learning Latin herself.

Mrs. Daly loved younger children. She would have enjoyed seeing the twins and James, but they were too much for nurse to handle, and Lena wouldn’t have been able to have her confidence-building visit with Will.

Mrs. Daly’s mother was just leaving through the main entrance, as Bridget slipped unnoticed down the steps into the servants’ entrance on the ground floor with her three children. She wanted to avoid Mrs. Jones asking her daughter “Is that woman asking you for help? Why do you put up with her—your former employee? You’re too soft-hearted, Emily.”



The Daly children were sitting with their mother in the parlor. Will, Mollie and Charlie were all wearing lovely outfits, Bridget thought—her dress sense alerted—outfits which their grandmother had probably bought for them, she thought.

After greeting Mrs. Daly, Lena was whisked off by Will to the game room, where he wanted to show her his newest interest—Roman soldiers.

“My new tutor is from Scotland. We’re studying the Roman legions. There were many legions in the Roman army. I’m assembling my own.” On a table covered with a heavy green cloth showing it was a field, he pointed to a small army that he was assembling. Brightly painted metal soldiers with round or rectangular shields, feathered helmets, and spears or swords, were lined up or already fighting a battle.



“Each legion has about 5500 legionaries, divided into ten cohorts, each except the first has about 500 soldiers. The first cohort has up to 800—that’s what I’m collecting. It takes the lead. Each cohort has its own standard bearer or signifier and horn-blower or cornicen who sounded commands to troops. Too-to-too.” He put an imaginary horn up to his lips and gave the signal to advance.



He pointed to one who had on a red cape and red shield. “This is a centurion. He’s risen through the ranks to become an officer. He commands a unit of a cohort. Each cohort is divided into six centuries.”

He took up another figure. “This is a tribune. There are six tribunes in charge of each legion. They’re from the wealthy Roman families and are destined for high office. I would like to be a tribune.”

Lena didn’t know whether she was impressed or amused; Will took this so seriously. “Don’t you want to be over all the tribunes?”

“That’s the legate. He’s appointed by the emperor.” Will spoke as if they were living in Roman times and there was a living emperor.

Finally, he showed her the small figure that carried a staff with an eagle on it. He handed it to her carefully. “This is the one I treasure the most. His position is sacred to the legion. It’s the Aquilifer or eagle-bearer. There’s only one of him and he carries the standard. If he surrenders the eagle, the entire legion is shamed. You can hold it, Lena.”

“No, no. I might drop it,” she retreated. He seemed relieved.

“Let’s have a battle. You be a Hun,” he suggested. She laughed and told him that she knew enough to know that she would lose and wanted to be on the winning side. “I’ll just be one of the legionaries, and you be the centurion.”

“Where did they fight?” she asked.

“Everywhere—England, France, Europe, Africa.”

“In Ireland? Did they fight the Chieftains?” Will hadn’t heard about any, “I’ll ask my tutor,” he promised, “but there are enough battles in France against the Gauls and in England against the Britons.”

While Will was showing Lena the fine points of deploying a legion against the Gauls, Mrs. Daly was developing her own battle plan against immorality in the city. The New York Ladies Moral Reform Society had decided that Five Points and the Bowery were the places to begin their attack on houses of prostitution.

They had suggested a tour to see some for themselves these places of immorality, to identify and target establishments.

“Bridget, since Peggy has refused to help us, we’re counting on you. We want to see for ourselves the kind of lives that these poor women lead and the places where they work. Would you be our guide?”

Bridget was caught off guard by the audacity of their scheme. While she couldn’t imagine herself leading such a tour, she couldn’t think of any graceful way to decline other than by pleading that she had a newborn and six other children to look after.

“You can leave the children with Lena some Saturday. Bring along your baby. No need for a pram; we’ll go in my carriage.

Bridget had no pram and carried the baby everywhere with her anyway. Somehow she found herself scheduled to take the ladies on a tour in June. “June 28,” Mrs. Daly said, consulting her diary, “if it’s all right with the others.”

Betty advised her to go ahead. “Surely, the ladies in their carriage won’t be surprised to find you living in a boarding house mainly occupied by servants, will they? If they want to be horrified, it shouldn’t be by **where** you live, but by **how** some poor women are forced to live to survive. If they want to see poor women prostituting themselves for money, there are enough ruined women for them to stare at.”

“They’re mainly after the men who run such establishments.”

“Show them some run by women!”

“Mrs. Malloy!?! I never want to see that woman again.”

“Then she’s one that you should certainly take the ladies in their carriages to visit.”

The more Bridget thought about it, the more she liked the idea. She would relish exposing Mrs. Malloy, who, she knew, was still profiting from the innocence of immigrants.

The Saturday in late June arrived and with it the ladies in their open carriage, driving down from leafy streets and townhouses of Washington Park and Greenwich Village into the crowded narrow streets of the tenement district on the edge of which where Bridget lived. Bridget hastened to get into Mrs. Daly’s carriage, handing John up to Mrs. Daly who wanted to hold the baby herself, “to

leave Bridget free to take us on a tour.”

She introduced Bridget to the two other ladies in the carriage—“Mrs. Martha Wilson, and Mrs. Elvira Strong.”



The ladies insisted on keeping the carriage open as they wound slowly through the narrow streets, avoiding trash heaps and wandering pigs or street vendors who cried out their wares. “*Here’s clams, here’s clams, here’s clams today/ They lately came from Rockaway/ They’re good to roast, they’re good to fry/ They’re good to make a clam-pot pie/ Here they go!*” The ladies insisted on stopping to buy some clams from the riming clam-seller.

The chimney sweep looked at them as if they were exotic creatures, but kept up his cry, “*Sweep o, sweep o.*” The ragman jostled among the crowds raising his plea for “*Rags, rags, any old rags.*” They found these figures colorful, but the hot-corn girls shocked them. Young barefoot girls in rags sold ears of hot roasted corn from baby carriages or children’s wagons. This struck them as a sign of depravity.

“That’s a girl who’s going to end up in prostitution. Some man has exposed that poor girl out here on the street to prurient buyers. What chance has she?” Martha Williams wanted to stop the carriage and speak to the girl, but Bridget suggested that she might not understand her motives. “She might think you want to turn her in for peddling.” The ladies contented themselves with buying some ears from the girl, then regretted it. “I have no intention of eating this,” Elvira Strong proclaimed. It was agreed that they would dispose of the corn when they were sufficiently far away.



Bridget wanted to take them immediately to Mrs. Malloy’s “establishment,” as they called any place where they could assume that prostitution was carried on. Mrs. Malloy greeted them and fussed over Bridget’s baby, and even asked about Peggy. The ladies, especially Mrs. Daly, were mystified by her tone to Bridget, whom she treated as if she were a dear former employee for whom she had done favors.

“It’s good you moved on, Bridget, as we wouldn’t have space for such a large family here—we only take singles now, as there is such a need, with all the newcomers arriving. We’ve split some rooms, but the demand is so great that newcomers must share. In the city there are not enough places for everyone—I tell them they’re lucky to find us. ‘You were sent to me,’ I told a young lady just this week—she arrived without a penny, just like you, but I took her in. I’m really too kind. I’ve such a tender heart.”

Bridget was mortified. She wanted to show the ladies what Mrs. Malloy's "kindness" consisted of. In the hallway, she caught a glimpse of a young girl who reminded her of Peggy—fragile and helpless. "Is that the young lady you mentioned?" She indicated the figure lingering by the door. "May we speak to her? My friends are interested in meeting young women like her."

Mrs. Malloy reluctantly called the girl in and allowed them a few moments with her, while she herself left the room to attend to some men who had just entered.

The girl's name was Jenny, she said; she was from County Clare and had no relatives here; she was eighteen and hoped to become a domestic. Bridget knew the ladies wanted to know what she would be doing here for Mrs. Malloy. "Jenny, Mrs. Malloy said that you arrived here penniless. What will you do for her in return for room and board?"

"I'll be a domestic, cleaning rooms and such." Bridget looked at the ladies and shook her head.

"Jenny, you might find that Mrs. Malloy has other plans for you."

"What would you do if you found that she expected you to entertain men?" Mrs. Wilson asked.

"Oh, no, Miss. Mrs. Malloy has a kind heart and wouldn't do such a thing." Jenny was surprised and embarrassed.

"Have you met any of the other girls here?"

"They're usually occupied, although I've talked to several at mealtime. They're very friendly and have offered to help me. I admire how well they've done for themselves. Some have been here less than a year."

"How do you think they managed that, Jenny?" Mrs. Daly asked.

"Why, they've saved their money, just as I will. I don't know what you mean, Miss."

"What we mean, Jenny, is that Mrs. Malloy will employ you as a prostitute, as she does the other girls here that you admire. And what chance of a future will you have then? Your character will have been ruined; you will be excluded from the abodes of the virtuous. No mother will receive you into her house in any capacity, where you might mingle with her little ones and poison their minds and endanger the morals of the older members of the family. Many girls have found themselves in that situation, Jenny, and broken-hearted and in despair, have committed suicide,"

Jenny was on the verge of tears when Mrs. Malloy returned and took her hand to lead her away. Bridget was glad to leave. Instead of exposing Mrs. Malloy, she had ruined a young girl's dream.

"Hopefully, she will come to her senses," Mrs. Wilson insisted, "before it's too late. We will see what we can do to have her place shut down, Bridget."

"What did you do for her, Bridget?" Mrs. Malloy asked.

Bridget tried to explain that they had been tricked into staying and she had been forced to work for Mrs. Malloy to pay the exorbitant rent and redeem her precious tablecloth. The ladies appeared to have no idea how she could have found herself in such a position with a husband. "What was he doing that he didn't support you himself?"

How could she explain the difficulty he had in finding work. Bridget was nearly in tears and felt the day had turned out very badly and was ready to go home. Her baby was hungry and fretting, but Mrs. Wilson had heard about "a most notorious 'dive' that ought to be closed down." She insisted on going, although Bridget suspected it was the one she had heard of from Mr. Reynold's daughter as a place no decent woman would be seen in.

"You will find yourselves in over your heads, I fear," she protested. When they arrived at the spot, on the Bowery, Bridget shook her head, saying that she would remain in the carriage with her crying infant, and asking the driver to raise the hood. "We would not be welcome anyway," she told the baby as she nursed him in private.

The ladies were undecided, seeing two entrances, until they realized that one was for ladies, who entered free, and the other for men, who were paying something. With their heads in the air, as if they knew where they were going, they filed willingly through the women's entrance,

Within a half hour, they were back, in a state of agitation. By then Bridget had composed herself and the baby was fast asleep. "Drive on," Mrs. Daly told the driver, who applied the whip vigorously.

"I never felt more out of place in my life," Mrs. Daly told her. "I would certainly not admit to my husband that I had been in such a place. No lady should ever go into one of these establishments."

"The entire place is just a pretext for men to meet loose women who will agree to go with them to some place for immoral purposes," Mrs. Strong agreed.

Mrs. Wilson wanted to describe the horrors. "We went through a long dark hall, then through some double doors into a large noisy room with a bar at one end

and a stage at the other. On the stage were a musical trio, if you could call it that—a violin, piano and cornet-- playing the most dreadful music. Dancers— exhibitionists---some must have been men dressed as women-- were performing a lewd floor show. . . “

“But the worst were the girl-waitresses,” Mrs. Strong cut in. “Imagine! Girls, waiting on men and serving drinks!” The women shuddered.

Mrs. Wilson continued--“Men were coming in, sitting down, and no sooner were they seated than they were set upon by waitresses begging for drinks--

“And offering themselves, I’ve no doubt,” Mrs. Strong interrupted again, “Some girls even sat on the men’s laps!”

“Some of the men contented themselves by dancing with the girls and slipping coins into their stockings, but others disappeared up into the balcony boxes with them, hiding behind curtains. . . “ Mrs. Daly shook her head in disbelief. ”I watched to see where they went,” she admitted. “How can girls allow themselves to be subjected to this treatment?” Mrs. Daly sighed.

They had worked themselves into such a state that Bridget didn’t know what conclusion they would arrive at. What would come of this, she wondered, as she descended from the carriage. She hoped never to hear of this day again, especially as she had been the nominal leader.

Bridget was glad to be delivered back at the boarding house where she suddenly realized that she had made no preparations for their Saturday evening meal—the boarding house kitchen was closed Saturday evenings. She hoped that Lena had thought to buy food.