



in *Galveston,*
TEXAS

My Heart Belongs
in *Galveston,*
TEXAS

*Madeline's
Search*

KATHLEEN Y'BARBO

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Our mission is to inspire the world with the life-changing message of the Bible.



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Dedication

To those who look at the stars and see their Creator;
To those who look at the sea or the hills or a bluebonnet in spring
and know God exists;
And to those who wish they could.

Also for all the history nerds and those who are BOI.

But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep. So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.

JONAH 1:4-6

Author's Note

I am a history nerd.
I want everything to be just right.
All the facts and just the facts.

However, sometimes the story calls for me
to “bend” history to make it fit.

If you're a history nerd too, be sure and read the special extra
chapter at the end of the novel to discover the inside
information on what is fact and what is fiction.

And if you have read the dedication and don't know about the folks
who Galveston natives call BOI, then that's the place to get the scoop.



*Gulf of Mexico
September 19, 1855*

The storm raged around us like a mad beast intent on taking our ship and all aboard down to the briny depths. The men assigned to the watch had given up and lashed themselves to their posts. At least two had already been lost to the waves.

For once I gave thanks that my wife had been too ill to travel with us. The illness that forbade her travel just may have saved her life.

Galveston lay behind us now, the storm's surge making it impossible to put in at port. So we sailed on, heading into the eye of the monster rather than out to sea where the waves would likely have already been stilled.

The reason for this decision, the cause for the choice to chance death and find a port to drop anchor, lay down below on a bunk in the captain's quarters. For tonight, regardless of the tempest that raged, a child would be born.

The child's father came to stand behind me, his face etched with nearly a full day and night of watching the one he loved endure indescribable pain. Behind him, the woman hired as nursemaid shook her head.

"So the child did not survive?"

A single tear traced my son's cheek. "The child, she is weak but alive."

"And Eliza?"

Again the nursemaid shook her head. This time she too showed tears. "Gone."

A groaning sound roared from the depths of the ship, and warning bells rang. We had been taking on water since an hour after sunset. I looked beyond these two to the man standing in the door.

He was waiting. No words were needed. The vessel and its occupants were done for. With only two small boats with which to evacuate, I knew what must be done.

"Turn for Indianola," I said. "We race the wind and hope for the best."

"But sir," my loyal crewman protested. "We will not make land in this vessel."

"We will get close enough," I told him.

And we did. The storm still raged farther south, but the winds were more companionable to sailing into port at Indianola. We did no such thing, of course, for to sail into that port in this ship would be to invite unwanted attention, even in this abysmal weather.

I ordered two small crafts sent out. One carried my son and the remains of his wife along with a loyal crewman to row. The other carried the child and her nursemaid. On this vessel, I sent my most trusted man to see to their safety.

"No matter what," I told him. "See that the child lives, even at the cost of your own life."

And he had vowed it would be so.

My son, a devoted sailor always, went on my orders but under a protest I understood. Even my answer, that separation from the child meant one might arrive safely if the other did not, did not dissuade him from his despair.

"Go and bury your wife," I told him as my crew fought to keep the ship from ruin. "Take rooms and wait for me here. Find a wet nurse for your daughter. I will come to you."

With that, I sent my son off into the night with the body of his wife wrapped in the same blankets where she had so recently given birth.

A moment later, I heard a sound like the mewling of a cat. I turned to see the nursemaid holding a bundle.

"She will live?" I asked her, for I knew I must make a report to my wife should the Lord allow us to be reunited this side of heaven.

"She will live."

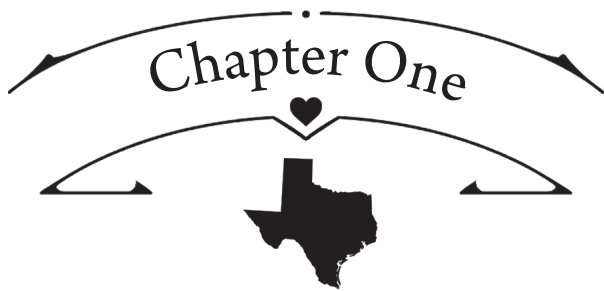
I pulled back the wrappings to see wide brown eyes peering up at me. One

tiny fist had found its way free of its prison and now shook at me like an angry fishmonger.

“Hello, little treasure,” I said to her. “Go with God. We will be together soon.”

And then I released my granddaughter to the waves and the wind and the care of God. Most certainly and especially the care of God.

Chapter One

A decorative graphic consisting of two curved lines forming a shape similar to a wide 'V' or a shallow arch. At the top center of the upper curve is a small black heart. Below the heart, centered between the two curves, is a solid black silhouette of the state of Texas. The entire graphic is symmetrical.

New Orleans, Louisiana
March 14, 1880

Of all the assignments Jonah had been given since he joined the agency almost ten years ago, this one had to be the strangest. Though his career thus far had included putting his life on the line to bring in murderers, thieves, and con men, here he sat sipping tea in the fancy New Orleans parlor of a woman old enough to be his grandmother.

Or at least pretending to while he studied the distinctly feminine rose-scented room. His gaze landed on the mantel where mismatched crystal vases were filled with the pink blossoms. Larger vases on the bookshelves opposite the fireplace vied for space among the leather-covered volumes.

Given the fact it was early March, Jonah wondered if she had a greenhouse to grow the flowers all year, but he didn't ask. In fact, there was much he wondered about this room, but with the goal of getting out of this place as quickly as possible, he remained silent.

The only space that did not show some evidence of the owner's penchant for pink roses was the window seat that looked out through lace curtains onto Prytania Street. As if to make up for that grievous transgression, the seat had been wrapped in the same rose-strewn fabric that covered the walls and the two chairs where he and Mrs. Smith now sat.

When Jonah returned his attention to his hostess, he found Mrs. Smith, a tiny woman who had obviously once been a great beauty, watching him carefully. Her dark eyes twinkled as she regarded him with what appeared to be equal parts assessment and amusement.

Though she'd only yet offered him a polite greeting and settled him into this parlor, Jonah couldn't help noticing this elderly woman had the smile and graceful movements of a much younger person. And her voice, when she spoke, held the slightest trace of an accent. Whether it was the familiar Acadian French of his grandfather's people that he recognized in her tone or something else entirely, he couldn't say.

"So, you think I've lost my mind, don't you?" she said as she lifted the teapot to pour more of the fragrant brew into his cup.

He did, and he'd told the captain as much. However, the woman sitting across from him had apparently paid dearly for the privilege of hiring a Pinkerton man to solve her case, and she had requested him specifically.

"Ma'am," he said in the reverential tone he'd learned from his mama back home in Texas, "I take every assignment seriously."

A smile rose and then she chuckled, lighting her wrinkled face as she set the teapot back in place. "Well done, Detective Cahill. You've answered my question without actually giving me your opinion of my sanity."

"Begging your pardon, Mrs. Smith," Jonah said, "but I don't believe you hired me to determine that."

"True, I most certainly did not." She sat back and gave him an appraising look. "Yes, I believe you'll do."

Unsure how to respond, Jonah merely nodded. Whether she liked him or not was of no difference to him.

He shifted positions and tried to pay attention as Mrs. Smith abruptly changed the subject and picked up her teacup then began to tell yet another story about tending her roses. Though he kept his gaze attentive and focused on his host, Jonah couldn't help but wish she would move on to the topic he had come to discuss.

"I do hope you don't mind me prattling on," his hostess finally said. "I shall miss my roses once we've all relocated to Galveston, and good

listeners are hard to find these days. You, Detective Cahill, are a good listener. I applaud either your parents or your superiors at the agency for training you well.”

“Thank you, ma’am,” he said for lack of any other response.

Mrs. Smith leaned forward, still balancing her teacup. “Do you have any questions for me, Detective Cahill?”

He paused. “I confess I have only skimmed the information you provided, but from what I recall, you wish me to find a young relative of yours, one Trésor Smith who was born in 1855 and who you believe is now residing in Galveston, Texas.”

“Trésor is my granddaughter. And I believe you will find her in Galveston, Texas, yes,” she said. “Indianola was the city of her birth, but as you know, most of the city was lost to a storm some five years ago.”

“So you believe she is in Galveston?”

“I *know* she will be,” she told him.

Jonah shifted positions. “Again, without consulting the full file, I must prepare you for the fact that as an adult, she may not want to be found. Or worse. . .”

“Yes, dear,” she said gently. “I understand what you mean, and although I am quite confident you will succeed, I do lay this all at the feet of Jesus for His ultimate solution.”

“Very well, then. I will give the file my full attention and be ready to begin the search when we meet again.”

She leaned forward. “Am I correct in understanding you will not require lodging during our stay on the island?”

“You are correct.”

She took a sip of tea and then regarded him with an innocent look. “Because you have family there?”

His brows lifted. “Yes,” he said carefully. “I do.”

“And you wonder how I knew this?” Mrs. Smith smiled as she set her teacup down.

“The thought did occur to me.”

Even those he was closest to within the Pinkerton Agency had no idea of his connection to this city. Jonah’s father had severed connection some twenty years ago for reasons unknown to anyone but himself and

Grandfather Cahill. They remained estranged until the day Father died. Even now, he had no idea if his grandfather still lived.

"The answer is simple," she said. "I knew your grandfather."

Knew. Past tense. A smidgen of grief arose.

"You wonder of my use of the term *knew*."

"I did wonder, yes."

She waved her hand as if dismissing the statement. "Truly, I cannot tell you whether Monsieur Cahill still draws a breath or not. Our acquaintance goes back many years but does not extend to the present."

Mrs. Smith sat back and awaited his response. For a moment Jonah had none.

Finally he found the words. "I see."

Mrs. Smith seemed to have sensed his ambivalence in regard to the old man. "He was a difficult man, but God has His ways of dealing with difficult men. Go and see for yourself."

Jonah let the comment pass with nothing more than a brief nod.

"Detective Cahill, I know there was much trouble under that roof while your grandfather lived," she continued, obviously not waiting for his response. "And apparently your father has overcome that trouble by finding a good life in Galveston."

"Yes, I believe he had," Jonah said.

"Had? So he is now deceased?"

"He is," Jonah said. "Lost to the fever some two summers ago."

"My deepest condolences, Detective Cahill. I remember him as the most precocious child. Please know your father was a very good man."

Jonah managed a smile as he tried to imagine his father as a boy. "I know he tried to be. I was blessed to be his son."

"Well, that is all the Lord really asks of us poor flawed humans, isn't it? That we try our best. The trick is to continue trying even once we've failed. That is the reason you are here and the whole purpose of my search for my granddaughter. You see, I failed in keeping her close. I wish to remedy this."

"Yes, ma'am," he said. "I will do my best to find her."

Mrs. Smith stood and so he did the same, their meeting obviously at an end. "Well then, I do appreciate you humoring me by paying a visit to

me here in New Orleans,” she said as she moved toward the door. “I look forward to seeing you again in Galveston when your assignment begins three weeks hence.”

“About that,” he said as he decided to raise a concern he hadn’t known how to voice until now. “You know, you do not have to feel obligated to go along with me. I can easily send updates to you here.”

Iron-gray brows rose. “You believe I will hinder your investigation?”

“No, ma’am, not at all. It’s just that I wonder about the wisdom of a sea voyage, albeit not a lengthy one, at your. . .”

No. He wouldn’t say it. To complete that thought aloud was to accuse a lady of being elderly, and although all evidence pointed to that fact, he’d been raised far too well to bring it up.

“Oh child,” she said with a chuckle. “Your concern is touching. If only you knew what I know about sea voyages and. . .”

Then she seemed to have her own trouble finishing her statement. Instead, Mrs. Smith shook her head and then placed her hand atop his sleeve.

“Look here. Don’t you worry, Detective Cahill. I’ll get there just fine, and I assure you I will not be traveling alone. I’ll be bringing a few of my staff along with me as well as my assistant. She has proven invaluable in helping me to write down my memories, and I am certain she will make an excellent traveling companion.”

“If you wouldn’t mind, I wonder if I might take a look at your assistant’s notes. There could be information contained in them that will help my search for your granddaughter.”

“Of course,” she said with a nod. “I will arrange it as soon as we are settled in Galveston. Now do take care on your journey. I know I am very much looking forward to mine. It will be wonderful to be back on the island.”

“So you’ve been before, then. Perhaps anything your assistant has recorded in relation to your previous visits will be of help in this investigation.”

“Oh child,” she said gently, “you’ll find nothing in those notes about such a thing. Some memories aren’t to be shared.”

He paused before responding. “While I understand, I do hope you’ll

keep in mind that I have been charged by you with uncovering secrets.” At her raised brows, he continued. “I have found, Mrs. Smith, that people do not go missing without secrets being part of the equation.”

Her surprised look turned to one of satisfaction. “Yes, of course. Rest assured, young man, I will neither hinder your investigation nor hide any information I believe might prove helpful.”

Jonah exchanged parting words and then left with a wave to his hostess and no doubts that Mrs. Smith would arrive just as fit and fine as she said she would. As to whether she was hiding something he might later need to know, that was yet to be determined.

He stepped out onto the banquette that ran alongside Prytania Street and checked his pocket watch. It was early yet, still several hours away from his appointed time to leave the city. Fitting the watch back into his vest pocket, Jonah gave brief thought to his dilemma.

Go.

He frowned, recognizing that nudge. Rather than stand outside Mrs. Smith’s home and argue unsuccessfully with the still, small voice that had never steered him wrong, Jonah sighed and headed toward Esplanade Avenue.

He found the address easily enough. The white two-story home with three columns running across the front and a balcony that spanned the upper floor was now bracketed between two smaller dwellings that had been built since Jonah’s last visit.

Three windows marched evenly across the second floor, their tops curved and their dark green shutters open to allow the midday sun. Two more windows matched their upstairs twins along the columned porch with the third spot held by a painted wooden door of deepest black.

Upstairs, a white lace curtain moved, but was it the breeze that caused it to shift or someone studying him as intently as he studied the stately residence?

Jonah paused for a moment, one hand resting on the smooth metal of the iron gate. To his right and his left a black iron fence, topped at intervals with the fleur-de-lis design that also appeared in his family’s coat of arms, stretched to the edges of the property. The entrance for carriages must have been moved to the back alley when

the property on each side was sold off.

Or perhaps those who resided behind this fence had no need for carriages any longer. Again Jonah sighed. Again the still, small voice said *go*.

Just as he was about to reach for the lever that opened the gate, he caught sight of a young woman walking toward him while looking down at something in her hand. Her cloak was made of fine green velvet just a shade darker than shamrocks, and her dark hair had been tucked up beneath a fashionable hat of a similar color.

She appeared so engrossed in whatever she held that she did not notice Jonah or act as if she recognized him until she was almost upon him. Oh but he knew her.

Even now as she appeared deep in thought, the old feelings rose. It had been the better part of a year since he'd seen her, longer than that since he trusted her.

And yet a small part of him knew if he wasn't careful, he could fall in love with her all over again.

The gate swung open beneath his hand, but Jonah did not step inside. Rather, he stood his ground and prepared for the next skirmish in what had become quite a battle with the frustrating female.

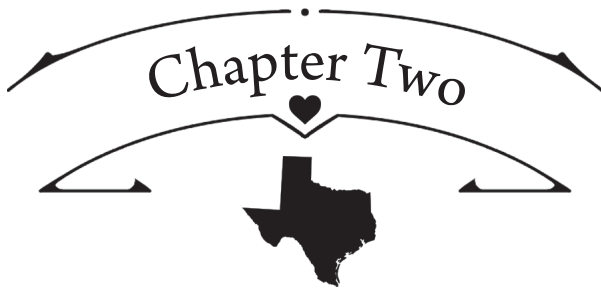
The woman walking toward him, a local journalist for the *New Orleans Picayune*, had ruined more than one Pinkerton investigation with her relentless snooping. She had also very nearly cost him his job and his freedom last summer.

What he would never tell her was that she had also broken his heart.

Though it appeared from Madeline Latour's lack of attention to anything other than whatever was in her hand that their meeting here today was pure accident, Jonah was skeptical. With this one, he was always skeptical.

He stepped into her path. "Hello, Madeline."

Chapter Two

A decorative graphic for the chapter header. It features the text "Chapter Two" in a serif font, centered within a decorative frame. The frame consists of two curved lines that meet at a small heart above the text and a larger, solid black silhouette of the state of Texas below it. The entire graphic is symmetrical.

Madeline jolted at the use of her first name, dropping her notebook in the process. Catching herself by grabbing the iron fence, she looked up into familiar eyes.

Regrettably familiar.

She sighed as she pushed away those old feelings that swirled around his memory. Of all the men to see today, it would have to be Detective Jonah Cahill of the Pinkerton Agency. What was he doing in New Orleans?

Gallant as always, the Pinkerton man reached for her notebook first. She couldn't help noticing his dark brows rising as he obviously spied the initials engraved on the notebook's leather cover: M.W. for Maggie Winston, the identity she had assumed in order to complete her investigation.

Each time Madeline took on a new identity in her role as an investigative journalist, she always added a few personal touches to give that persona the image of reality. The notebook had been the perfect accessory, so perfect that it had practically secured her the job that would give her access to an eyewitness that no one else had been able to interview.

"This can't be yours, can it?" he said with an infuriating quirk of his dark brow.

"Thank you," she said as his fingertips brushed her palm. "It's lovely, isn't it?"

"Quite," he said as his eyes raked the length of her. From any other

man, the gesture might have seemed impudent, rude even, but this was a man with whom she had some history. Good history until she ruined it.

Had he chosen that life instead of this one, Detective Jonah Cahill might have made a daunting outlaw. He was of imposing height and build with eyes of silver gray and pitch-black hair that curled at his neck.

Jonah wore his ability to decipher people and stop them cold with a casual air. His face was perpetually fixed with an expression that seemed to assume he had already won the war before the battle began.

It had been almost a full year since she'd last seen the handsome Pinkerton. The last time they met, outside the courthouse after the McRee case concluded, she had made Jonah so mad he swore he'd have her arrested.

Worse, she'd broken his heart and she knew it. What he didn't know was he had also broken hers.

At this very moment, his expression told her he'd lock her in jail and throw away the key if given the chance. Not that she blamed him.

"Thank you, Jonah," she said as she carefully tucked the notebook into her pocket. "I would ask what brings you to New Orleans but I assume you'd tell me you couldn't answer the question."

His lip curled into what almost passed for a smile. "That was always your trouble, Madeline. You assumed."

Madeline forced herself not to allow Jonah to see that the truth of the hurtful comment had reached its mark. Instead, she nodded toward the house nearest them. "I was sorry to hear of your grandfather's death. Yellow fever, I believe it was?"

She could see by his expression that Jonah hadn't known. "Oh, I am so sorry. No one told you, did they?"

Any remnant of civility disappeared. "Goodbye, Madeline," Jonah said as he stormed inside the fence.

The gate slammed behind him, leaving her to decide whether to respond with a polite goodbye or just gather up the remains of her pride and walk away. Madeline chose the latter.

Besides, she had an appointment and could not be late. Her tears would wait for later when she did not have to explain them to anyone.

Not that she could.



Jonah stood on the porch and watched Madeline walk away. Sashay, as his mother would call it, for the infernal woman never could help looking like royalty. From her regal bearing to the way she seemed to be above it all even when she obviously did not mean to, she was nothing like any woman he'd ever known.

And that is how he'd managed to fall in love with her. It was why he'd fallen head over boot heels for the nosy reporter who he'd imagined would be his for life.

All he could hope as he watched her walk away was that the Lord had saved him from a pain worse than the one he felt right now. He'd trust in that and in his ability to forget Madeline Latour someday.

One last look at the frustrating female, and Jonah turned his back on her. His anger had led him as far as the front porch, but now he wondered about the wisdom of knocking on the door.

He hadn't been here since his grandmother's funeral, and now his grandfather was gone as well. *Go*. Yes, it was time.

Jonah knocked twice, and someone called for him to come in. He stepped inside, allowing his eyes a moment to adjust to the dim light of the two-story foyer, then heard the swish of petticoats a moment before a woman called out.

"Who is that out there?"

"It's me," he responded. "Jonah."

Bess's cackling laugh reached him a moment before she did. Wrapping him in her ample arms, the woman who'd been with the Cahill family as long as Jonah could remember held him tight.

Finally, she released him and took a step backward. "I sure am glad to see you. What brings you to New Orleans?"

"Work." He paused. "I didn't know about Grandfather Cahill until today."

"Oh child," she said. "No reason you would have. He was a stubborn man. Never did forgive your daddy for marrying your mama, so it isn't surprising he didn't leave word for her when he was sick."

"She will be devastated all the same." He paused. "My mother never

gave up on that stubborn old man.”

“I know. I do love your mama so.” She paused to give him an even look. “I am sorry, Jonah, but he left this home and everything in it to charity.”

It took him a moment to realize what she was saying. “I didn’t come here to get anything from him. I just wanted to know. . .” He paused. “I hope you’ve been cared for, though.”

“Oh yes, Mr. Cahill was quite generous with me, but then I always knew he would be.” She paused to give him a knowing look. “That man always did know I kept his secrets, and in return, he made sure I was rewarded. I’d say that’s an even trade.”

“What will you do? You know you’re always welcome in Galveston. My mother could use the company.”

“I do thank you,” she said. “And much as I love your mama, I think I’ll stay here until the charities take over. Then who knows? Maybe I’ll pay your mama a visit. Say, how is that little sister of yours?”

“Susanna is ever the same. I wish she’d settle down, but she refuses.”

“Now don’t you go rushing her. She’ll find someone in time and without her big brother’s help.”

“I suppose. She’s beautiful, Bess, the image of Mama at her age from what I’ve been told, and a much better shot than I am.”

“Either way she’ll find a man, then.” Bess laughed. “I credit your daddy for teaching the both of you to shoot well.”

“That is true,” he said. “He would be proud of how she turned out.”

“I reckon he would be proud how you turned out too. Look at you, a fine Pinkerton man. I am so proud of you, Jonah Cahill.” Her expression brightened. “But I can tell they don’t feed you right up in Chicago. You give me a minute and I’ll have you some shrimp gumbo on the table.”

“That sounds mighty fine,” he said, “but I’ve got a train to catch, so I can’t stay long.”

She shook her head. “Since when did it take you long to fill up on my cooking?”

“You’ve got me there, Miss Bess,” he said as he hugged her once more, this time lifting her feet off the floor.

“Put me down, Jonah Cahill,” she demanded between fits of laughter.

"You might be two heads taller than me, but it wasn't that long ago you were nothing but trouble."

"Some would say I still am," he quipped as he released her to follow a step behind as she led him into the dining room.

While Bess scurried to the outdoor kitchen to fetch his meal, Jonah settled on the chair she indicated. His grandfather's chair.

How many times had he seen Grandfather Cahill sit here with his spectacles on the end of his nose and a newspaper in his hands? And how many more times had he seen his father do the exact same thing in their kitchen in Galveston?

Too many to count.

He missed them both dearly at that moment, and that surprised him. But that was one news story the nosy reporter from the *Picayune* would never get.



With only a few minutes to spare, Madeline arrived on the doorstep of McCloskey's Restaurant at Numbers 70 and 72 on St. Charles Street and ducked inside beneath a banner proclaiming their motto: "The best the market affords with prices to suit the times." Immediately she was ushered upstairs to a private family room.

Her hands still shook from her encounter with Jonah. It would not do to allow her brother to see, so she shoved her hands into her pockets as she stepped into the room.

Her brother Phil, technically Phillip Emmanuel Latour IV, had already helped himself to a meal and was dabbing at the corner of his mouth with a napkin as the door closed behind her. Where she had inherited her mother's fair Irish coloring—and some would say temperament—Phil was the image of their olive-skinned father.

"Sit and eat." He reached for a bell to ring for the waiter.

"No time," Madeline replied as she removed her cloak and then snatched a piece of bread from the basket in the center of the table. "I'm due back in half an hour," she said as she liberally applied butter and jam before taking a bite.

"Ah, the secret project," Phil said as he lifted one brow. "Ironic, don't

you think, given our family's choice of occupation?"

Madeline chuckled. "You act as if we had any choice in the matter of our occupation."

Truly, choice was never given in regard to the family business. The Latour family had dealt in secrets for three generations, possibly longer, and with the birth of Phil's two sons the business was likely to continue on for at least another generation.

When anyone in New Orleans possessed a great need for discretion, a desire to find something or someone, and a vast amount of money with which to pay, the Latour family was always the first to be consulted on the matter.

Such was their reputation that there was no need to advertise the family's services. Rather, clients came recommended to them by others. Father sent son and mother sent daughter for over a century, most coming from families of bankers, men of commerce, politicians, and several, noble birth.

"I worry about you, Maddie," he said as he sat back to regard her with a measuring look. "What need have you to hide anything? It is just a newspaper article, isn't it?"

It wasn't, but still she ought to have shared the details with Phil. Something held her back, likely the fact that he would either dissuade her or beat her to the answer.

"Patience," she told him. "I promise I will tell you everything just as soon as my research is complete. But I will say that it may turn out to be more than just an article. I just don't know yet. It could be nothing."

Madeline punctuated the statement with a smile that she hoped would convince her nosy older brother that she was sincere. Depending on where the facts led in this investigation, the family might not like the notoriety it would bring.

Maybe she would write the story under a pseudonym. That would be a good discussion to have with Papa when the time came, for proving that Jean Lafitte not only lived after reports of his demise but also married again and survived to an old age would definitely catapult her, and by result the Latours, into the spotlight.

Borrowing a sentiment from Mother, she would cross that bridge