

PRAISE FOR *THE GOLDEN BRIDE*

“Kimberley Woodhouse is a master at historical romance. It’s nearly impossible to find her equal.”

—Colleen Coble, *USA Today* bestselling author of *The View from Rainshadow Bay* and the Rock Harbor series

“Once again Kimberley Woodhouse spins a charming story of love, mystery, and adventure. Set against the backdrop of the gold rush in California, Kim shows us the life of greed and corruption so evident in the desires of man to get rich quick, while giving a beautiful example of God’s mercy and truth. I encourage my readers and anyone else who enjoys a fun and inspiring read to get their hands on a copy of *The Golden Bride*.”

—Tracie Peterson, bestselling author of the Golden Gate Secrets series and many others

“Kimberley Woodhouse is a must-read for me! Her grasp on historical fiction is delightful, and the stories she weaves leave me eagerly anticipating her next tale!”

—Jaime Jo Wright, Daphne du Maurier and Christy Award-Winning author of *The House on Foster Hill*

“Kimberley Woodhouse does it again. *The Golden Bride* is filled with mystery, history, and intrigue that will keep the reader glued to each page from cover to cover.”

—Darcie J. Gudger, author of the Guarded series, *SPIN*, *TOSS*, and *CATCH* (spring 2019)

“Kimberley Woodhouse’s commitment to historical integrity, paired with her luminous storytelling, makes her an author to both trust and cherish. Any book with her name on it is a book I need to read.”

—Jocelyn Green, award-winning author of *Between Two Shores*

*The
Golden
Bride*



KIMBERLEY
WOODHOUSE

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All scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either products of the author's imagination or used fictitiously. Any similarity to actual people, organizations, and/or events is purely coincidental.

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



Printed in the United States of America.

DEDICATION

This book is lovingly dedicated to Kayla.

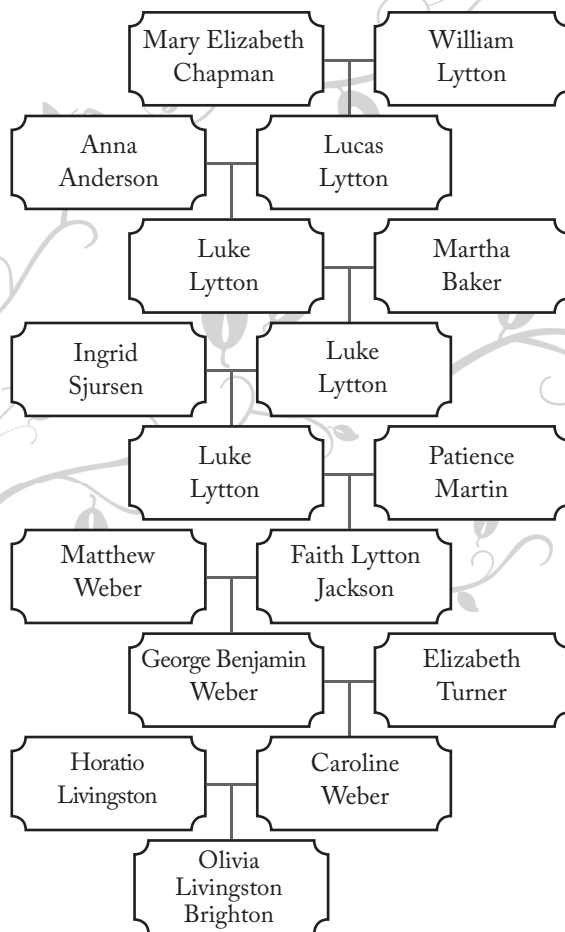
I could gush about how beautiful you are inside and out and how you inspire me every single day, but I'll try not to embarrass you.

Avid literature enthusiast, language student, and theology buff, you never cease to amaze me with your love for the Lord and your passion for learning. You've faced more adversity in your young life than most people ever have to deal with in an entire lifetime, yet you smile and shine God's love to everyone around you. I'll never be able to tell you how proud I am of you and how very thankful I am that God gave you to us. It's amazing to get to be your mom. I am so excited for the journey you are on, and I miss you like crazy.

1 ΤΙΜΟΘΗΥ 1:17 (scripture in Greek)

Τῷ δὲ Βασιλεῖ τῶν αἰώνων, ἀφθάρτῳ ἀοράτῳ μόνῳ Θεῷ,
τιμὴ καὶ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων· ἀμήν.

Daughters of the Mayflower



The Lytton Family

William Lytton married Mary Elizabeth Chapman (Plymouth 1621)

Parents of 13 children, one who was Lucas

Lucas Lytton (born 1625) married Anna Andersen (Massachusetts 1649)

Luke Lytton (born 1652) married Martha Baker (Massachusetts 1675)

Luke Lytton (born 1677) married Ingrid Sjursen (Massachusetts 1699)

Luke Lytton (born 1700) married Patience Martin (Virginia 1730)

Faith Lytton Jackson (born 1742) married Matthew Weber (Virginia 1775)

George Benjamin Weber (born 1776) married Elizabeth Turner (1798)

Caroline Weber (born 1799) married Horatio Livingston (1816)

Olivia Livingston Brighton (born 1829)

Dear Reader,

I'm so glad you've joined us for the next installment in the Daughters of the Mayflower Series, *The Golden Bride*.

In 1849, California was a wild and crazy place. Not only had the territory gone from Spanish to Mexican to US control, but crime and violence had taken over most of the area as people flocked from all over the world in search of their fortunes in gold. California's native peoples had been mistreated, many of them were brutally murdered, and the territory was in desperate need of government, all while it barreled toward becoming the thirty-first state in the United States.

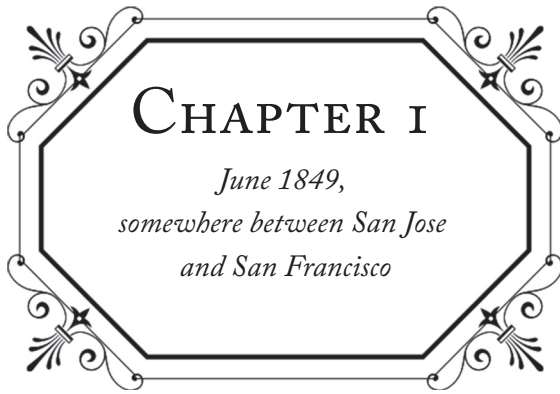
San Francisco—formerly named Yerba Buena—quickly became one of the world's greatest ports. Tens of thousands of people descended on the area in just a matter of months. This is where we come to our story.

If you've read any of my other books, you know that I am a history buff. I love introducing true history to people through fictional stories in hopes of sparking interest in our great past. It has been a joy to receive the stacks of letters, emails, and Facebook messages from readers who are excited about our great country's history, and it encourages me to learn that I have done my job. It is my hope that this story will do the same for you.

While I did a lot of research into the background of San Francisco for this book, please remember that it is a work of fiction. I've used the names of some historical characters and streets, as well as included many historic events in the story, but please see the note at the end of the book for details about what truly happened and what I created for the world of *The Golden Bride*.

As always, I pray this story blesses you.

Enjoy the journey,
Kimberley



CHAPTER I

*June 1849,
somewhere between San Jose
and San Francisco*

No matter how much he thought he deserved to be one, Olivia Brighton's husband of six weeks was *not* a king. Just because he'd been named after the thirteenth king of Judah didn't mean he was destined for greatness as well. Even if that's what his father had told him. And saying it over and over didn't make it come true either.

His namesake was a righteous ruler and godly man, but Hezekiah Brighton was neither. Nor was he rich, honest, or even smart, for whatever that was worth. And it wasn't worth much. *Hezekiah* wasn't worth much.

Shame washed over Olivia for a moment, and she grimaced at her thoughts.

As she stood beside their covered wagon and looked out toward the horizon, Olivia sighed. Guilt had been her constant companion these past few weeks. It seemed like every time she turned around she was having to repent. *Lord, I'm sorry. Forgive me for my horrible thoughts toward Hezekiah.*

No matter what kind of man he was, he was her husband. *She* was the one who had agreed to marry him after she'd only known him a day. He'd been so handsome, attentive, and charming. Even though she'd had plenty of doubts about him, his offer to help and promise to take her to San Francisco so she could be near her brother had made her jump in with both feet faster than she could say her new name.

She should have spent more time in prayer about it, but she missed her brother, Daniel, the only family she had left. It had been years since she'd seen him, and her heart ached for family. That was not a good excuse to marry a complete stranger, though, no matter how good-looking he was. But after Mama and Daddy had died so suddenly, her options had spiraled down to nothing. And there had been debts to pay.

What did she think would happen even if Hezekiah honored his promise and took her to San Francisco? It's not like all of a sudden she wouldn't be married to him anymore. And she *definitely* couldn't just up and leave and go live with her brother. Why hadn't she thought this through? It was so unlike her to grasp at straws. What would she tell Daniel? He was sure to be disappointed when he met Hezekiah.

If they ever made it there and the two men in her life actually met. . . That was a mighty big *if*. Her husband's detours were getting out of hand.

In the still of the morning air, Olivia shook her head of the negative thoughts. She'd made a mistake and would have to live with it. She needed to make the best out of the situation and pray that the man she married would eventually get them to San Francisco and provide for her. Or at the very least yearn to be a better man.

While worry had never been something she struggled with in the past, her new marriage had given her a fair share of it. Hezekiah hadn't stuck with the same thing for more than two days in a row. Almost every day he'd come up with a new scheme—his next get-rich-quick idea. They'd done little more than drive around in the wagon for six weeks, always looking for a new way to find his fortune.

The sun fully crested the horizon, its rays warming her face. Breakfast wouldn't make itself. Olivia wasn't sure they had enough food to last them through the day, but they could at least start off with a decent meal. Hezekiah had taken off with one of the horses

an hour earlier saying something about his plans, but Olivia hadn't truly been listening. Every day it was the same. He'd get up and go off and come racing back with news of whatever they were about to plunge into next. They'd eat breakfast, and then they'd head out with the wagon. By the time they reached the destination, the jobs were gone, the money was gone, or Hezekiah simply had changed his mind and told her that the *next* day he would find whatever it was he was looking for.

Like clockwork, she heard the hooves of their horse running toward her. Wiping her hands on her apron, she realized that Hezekiah hadn't been late for one meal. See? At least he was dependable in one area. Maybe that was what she should do to turn her attitude around. Try to find one positive thing about her new husband each day. She could do that. Maybe.

"Olivia!" Hezekiah's shout broke through her thoughts, and she turned to him and pasted on her dutiful-wife smile.

"Good morning. Are you hungry?" She pumped enthusiasm into her words.

"I sure am." He hopped off the horse and tied it to the wagon. Placing his thumbs under his suspenders, he walked toward her and kissed her on the cheek. "I've got great news. We're headed to San Francisco."

The shackles of doubt and worry fell off her like a burdensome weight. "Really? We're finally going?" She could hug the man.

"Yup. The rumors are true. There's plenty of gold there, and I aim to get my share of it!" He sat on the ground and started wolfing down his plate of food.

Maybe he didn't deserve a hug after all. But what did it matter? They were headed to San Francisco! After she told Daniel the truth, maybe he could help. There was hope on the horizon. She doubted there was enough gold there to amount to much anyway. Hezekiah

was always blowing things out of proportion.

“We’re only a day or two away, and I need supplies, so we’ll stock up as soon as we’re done here. Then tonight or tomorrow we’ll camp outside of town so that I can get started the first thing in the morning.”

“That sounds like a good plan.” Forcing her breathing to remain steady, Olivia kept her excitement at bay. She would show Hezekiah her support and allow herself to rejoice that she would finally see her brother again. As joy and relief mingled in her mind, another emotion swelled in her abdomen.

Grief.

Mama and Daddy were gone, and she didn’t know if Daniel had received her letter. How would he take the news? What if she had to tell him in person? So many things had happened that had brought her to this place. What would he think of her decisions? Would he blame her?

“I’ll need you to work at your brother’s restaurant for a while to support us.” Hezekiah broke through her thoughts. “Just until the gold starts coming in.”

Of course he would. She shouldn’t have told Hezekiah about Daniel’s prosperous business, but she’d offered to get a job there, thinking it would motivate her husband to get them to San Francisco faster. “That’s fine. I don’t mind hard work.” And it would keep her busy. Maybe that would help the ache of loss fade.

He slurped up the last of the gravy off the plate. “It’s just for a little while. We’ll be rich before ya know it, and we’ll have a passel of kids.” The tone of his voice sounded convincing, but Olivia knew better. “Let’s get packed up so we can get supplies. It’s going to be a great day.” Hezekiah rubbed his hands together.

Yes, it would be. She was on her way to San Francisco.



Miles and hours later, Olivia stretched her legs beside the wagon. Foolish man. He'd spent every last penny on supplies for his gold digging but hadn't bothered to replenish any of their food stores. She had enough to make a pan of biscuits, and that was it, so Hezekiah had gone off to hunt something for dinner.

Olivia wouldn't hold her breath. The man had tried to hunt numerous times and never came back with anything. Looked like biscuits would have to do at least until they made it the rest of the way into San Francisco tomorrow. Looking in the direction of the town, Olivia could only hope it wasn't that much farther. Between getting stuck in the mud, Hezekiah spending entirely too much time buying supplies, and then his penchant for getting lost, she doubted they could even make it tomorrow.

Once again ashamed for her negative thoughts, Olivia plopped down onto the grass. This wasn't her. She'd never been such a negative Nellie. How had six weeks changed her so much?

Lord, I need Your divine help. I don't know how to deal with all this. I want to honor You with my thoughts and my actions. But I don't think I made a good decision marrying Hezekiah, and now that I've got to deal with the consequences, I'm a mess. Help my attitude. Help me be a good wife. Help us to find our way to Daniel's. And forgive me, Lord. Please.

As she poured out her heart to the Lord, Olivia felt a bit better. It didn't change the circumstances, but she knew she needed to get herself back on a more positive track. She couldn't continue down this path of negativity and complaining.

Daddy had always teased her about her skepticism and her partiality for sarcasm, but her life had been full of family, love, laughter, and quick wit back then. It had balance. Now there wasn't much to be happy about, and her pessimism had gone to an extreme. It wasn't good, and she knew it. But how could she fix it? Confessing it every

day just made her feel worse and like more of a failure.

A shot rang out in the distance. Lifting her head toward the sound, she convinced herself to be positive. Perhaps Hezekiah had gotten them some meat for dinner after all. She could always hope. Standing up, she went back over to where she'd started to set up camp for the night. She should get everything going so that when he came back to their wagon, she could make them a meal. And maybe she could work on her attitude with Hezekiah and show him some encouragement and support. The Bible did say that a contentious woman was like a dripping rain. It also said that it was better to live in the wilderness than to live with a contentious woman. She didn't want to be that—even if her marriage was less than ideal.

Olivia just needed to find herself again. Starting now. Maybe God could still bless her marriage if she looked at it as a chance to make up for her mistakes.

When the biscuits were finished and she'd done all she could to tidy up and get everything ready for the night, Olivia looked off in the direction she'd heard the shot. Maybe he hadn't shot anything after all. But watching the sun sink in the western sky made her nervous. Hezekiah had never been late for a meal. Until now.

Maybe he'd gotten something large like a deer. That would take him a while to clean and drag back to camp, wouldn't it? Sitting down next to the fire, she was overtaken by weariness. She'd just sit down for a spell and wait for him to return.

The howl of an animal brought her awake in an instant. How long had she been asleep? The night sky was illuminated by a canvas of stars with the moon shining high above. Rubbing her eyes, she tried to get rid of the cobwebs of sleep left in her mind. Olivia jumped to her feet and looked around. She'd been resting up against the wagon wheel this whole time, and the crick in her neck was proof. Looking around, she spied the pan of biscuits still sitting by

the fire. But no Hezekiah. What if he'd gotten lost again? Or had been attacked by a wild animal?

The thought made her gasp, and she put a hand to her throat. As much as her husband wasn't ideal, the idea of anything happening to him sickened her.

With a quick cleanup of the camp, Olivia decided she had to find him no matter what. She placed a couple of hard biscuits into her apron pocket, grabbed the lantern, and climbed onto their other horse, Buttercup. *Lord, please let me find him. Please.*

She pointed the horse in the direction from which she'd heard the shot. Hezekiah might be well beyond that place now, but at least it gave her a place to start.

Time passed in the plodding steps of the horse. Afraid she might miss his prone form if he'd fallen asleep, Olivia didn't want to take any chances by going too fast. Sweeping the lantern back and forth, she searched. As the horizon began to light with the predawn hues of orange and gold, she didn't know what to do. Too many scenarios ran through her mind. Hezekiah killed by a bear, fallen from his horse and severely injured, wandering in the wilderness around them, dying of hunger and thirst. Her heart filled with compassion for the man she'd married, and once again guilt took up residence. Maybe if she'd been the wife he needed—the wife she should have been—he wouldn't be lost right now.

Another horrifying thought took root. What if he'd taken off without her?

Shaking her head, Olivia couldn't believe that was true. Especially not without all the supplies he'd just spent their last money on. But... would he?

Buttercup shook her head and whinnied, bringing Olivia's focus back to the trail in front of them. A shadowy form on the ground didn't appear to be moving. Buttercup took a step back and whinnied

again. Something wasn't right, and the horse didn't like it.

Olivia took a deep breath and slid off her mount's back. She patted Buttercup's neck and spoke in a soothing tone. "It's all right. I'm going to go check this out. You just stay right here for me, all right, girl?"

A huff from the beloved animal wasn't very encouraging.

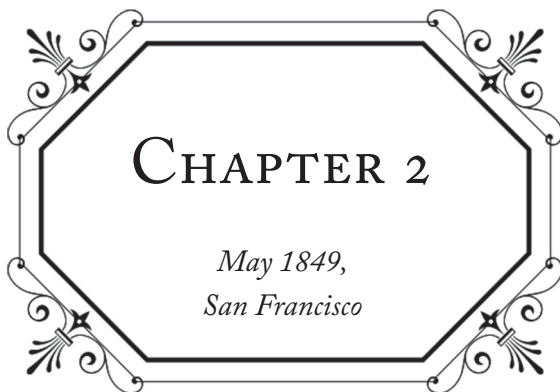
With tentative steps, Olivia moved forward until she realized the form on the ground was indeed a person. The buzzing of flies caught her attention right as she noticed the darkened grass. Blood. And lots of it.

With a gasp, she covered her mouth with her right hand but moved quickly to the body's side. It only took a second for her to recognize Hezekiah Brighton.

Her husband.

Dead.

Perhaps God hadn't given her a second chance after all.



CHAPTER 2

*May 1849,
San Francisco*

Joseph Sawyer shoved his hands into his pockets and walked to Livingston's Restaurant for lunch. It was hard not to feel utter sadness and shame at the depravity he saw around him as he took long strides through the dirty, raucous town. San Francisco had turned into a modern-day Sodom and Gomorrah with all the crazed gold seekers who flooded the streets each day.

He could say that with all honesty and without judgment because not too long ago, *he'd* been one of them. When he came to San Francisco by chance two years ago, he'd been a mess. He'd been lost, broke, always looking for a fight. But after gold had been found, he threw all of his energy into the hunt. Why God had chosen to bless him with a bountiful claim was beyond Joseph's understanding, especially when he had been a ne'er-do-well himself. But here he was. Grateful for grace, second chances, and a friend who had picked him up out of the pig sty.

Walking through the open door of the restaurant, Joseph headed to his regular table.

"I'll be there in a minute." Daniel Livingston waved from across the room.

Joseph waved back.

It amazed him to this day. If not for Daniel, Joseph would've been killed when he'd first found gold. The memory of that night rushed

into his mind as he took a seat at the table and watched the restaurant continue to fill. Daniel had barely known him at the time but said for some reason God had placed Joseph on his heart. So Daniel had gone to find him that night and had dragged him out of the saloon. With his pockets full of gold nuggets that he'd been showing off, Joseph had been picking a fight. . .again.

He owed Daniel his life, and not just his physical life. If his friend hadn't taken him in, given him advice to lie low and keep his mouth shut, Joseph would certainly be lying dead in the street, his claim taken by someone else.

Over the next weeks, Daniel fed him, straightened him out, and introduced him to the Lord. Once Joseph had his eternal life in order, Daniel helped him figure out a plan. He'd spent days toiling with Joseph at the claim, found him suitable workers, helped him open a bank account, taught him how to study the Bible, and showed him how to give to others.

Thankful those difficult days had taken place but were now safely ensconced in his past, Joseph smiled. It all boiled down to the fact that God wasn't done with any of them yet. He was a God of second chances. Even so, on some days Joseph wondered why the Lord tarried. It had to grieve Him to see the way the world had gone.

Looking around the crowded restaurant, Joseph felt a bit of that grief. Nearly all of the tables—more than thirty if Daniel hadn't added more—were full. Full of men caught up in the lust and greed running rampant in this city. Plagued with stealing, prostitution, gambling, and murder, San Francisco wasn't a place most God-fearing people stayed. But his friend Daniel remained, stating that someone had to stand for what was right and be an example of Christ. His actions encouraged Joseph to do the same.

Now that he'd already made a small fortune for himself in gold and the claim was still producing, Joseph had funded the building of

a church and, with Daniel's help, had purchased clothing and food for people in need. He longed to do so much more, but trying to keep his prosperity quiet was harder than he'd anticipated—to say nothing of protecting his workers and the mine. It was a good distance away from San Francisco, but that didn't stop thieves from trying to hijack it all.

So every day at lunch, he and Daniel discussed their plans. What they could do to help next. How they could shine a light for Christ in San Francisco. What better place to do it than from within the heart of the city? The restaurant was the most popular eatery in town. And not just because it had the best food, but because Daniel didn't believe in gouging the customers like everyone else did. That only made its reputation grow.

The Lord had truly blessed Joseph and his friend. They might be two of only a few upstanding citizens in San Francisco right now, but they could change that by helping one person at a time. It could be done. Just look at what God had done in Joseph's life.

A young, skinny boy came to the table. "Would you like the lunch special, Mr. Sawyer?"

The rich scent of roast beef filled the restaurant. "Yes, I would. It smells wonderful. Thank you very much." Joseph smiled at the kid and wondered where Daniel had found this one. Always soft-hearted for the needy, his friend hired a lot of the downtrodden to help them get on their feet.

The object of his thoughts—the owner and Joseph's friend—made his way to the table. "Sorry to keep you waiting." Daniel picked up his napkin and placed it in his lap. "We keep getting busier every day it seems."

"No matter how many times you apologize, it still doesn't need to be done. It's never a problem. I know you have a lot to do to keep this place running."

Daniel shook his head slightly. “It’s definitely a wonder to me how fast this town has filled up—with more coming every day. I know God has me here, but some days I’m exhausted by it all and think of moving to a quiet place in the country—away from all this.”

Joseph leaned forward and put his elbows on the table. “I’ve had the same thoughts, my friend.”

“But you know I’m not going anywhere. I know God has me here.” He swiped a hand down his face. “I’m simply tired.”

“What can I do to help? You know I’ve got plenty of workers that keep things running—thanks to you—so let me help you here.”

Daniel leaned back and appeared to be pondering the request. “You know. . .there is something that would really help me. But it’s a lot to ask.”

“It can’t be more than what you’ve done for me, and besides, you rarely ask me for anything.” Joseph tapped his finger on the table to emphasize the point. “Tell me what you need.”

The young skinny kid brought them plates of steaming food and filled their coffee cups.

Daniel nodded and looked at the young man. “Thank you, Stephen.”

The kid beamed a smile at his boss.

Joseph looked to his friend. “I’ll say the blessing, and then you can tell me what you need.” As he lifted a brief prayer of thanks heavenward, he also prayed for wisdom for them as they sought to do the Lord’s work in their town.

With a bite of food lifted on his fork, Daniel cleared his throat. “You know I’ve opened that mercantile and restaurant in Sacramento?”

The smell of roast beef and mashed potatoes filled Joseph’s senses and made his mouth water. He took a bite. “Mm-hmm. How’s it going?”

“Well, I need to get a large load of supplies up there. They’ve been

sitting in my storehouse in the back for way too long. I'm just short-handed and haven't had time to go myself. It might take more than a week for you to deliver them. Are you willing to do that?"

"Of course. I don't have a city council meeting for another couple of weeks, so I'm free to go. Anything I can do to help." A trip to Sacramento might be kind of nice. At least he'd get away for a little while.

"That would be a huge help to me." Daniel put his napkin down and took a deep breath. "And that way I don't have to leave right now. . . ." His friend let the words hang as if there was more to the story.

Joseph waited a moment and watched Daniel's face. "Something else on your mind?"

His friend sighed and looked out the window. "I received a letter from my sister that our parents have died."

The grief carried in the words hit Joseph in the chest. He leaned back. "I'm sorry about your parents. I had no idea—I thought they were doing quite well." He knew how close Daniel had been to his family. They were dear to him even though distance kept them from seeing one another.

"They were. But apparently, they caught some disease from the village they were ministering to. Olivia found them, but they died a few hours later."

"I'm sorry. That must have been devastating for her. How is your sister doing? How far away is she?"

"They all lived down near Santa Barbara. My parents had wanted to be missionaries there, but my dad ended up being a farmer for the most part and would visit the villages once a month. They didn't have much, so I'm sure Olivia has had to sell the farm. That's why I'm worried. I have no idea how she's doing. She's only a kid."

"How old is she?" Joseph's heart sped up. He knew firsthand what

it was like to be on his own as a kid. And a girl being left alone and on her own didn't bode well.

"Let's see. She's ten years younger than me. . . ." Daniel gave a sad chuckle. "I guess that means she's twenty years old. So not a kid anymore." His words faded as he stared out the window again. "She was just a kid the last time I saw her." He shook his head.

Joseph noticed the sheen of tears in his friend's eyes, the weight of loss printed on his features. "Santa Barbara is a good ways from here. Do you need to go get her? Or do you need *me* to go get her?"

Daniel looked him in the eye again, his grief plain. "No, but thank you for offering. She wrote that she was going to make her way here, but I have no idea how or when. And that's what worries me. I feel helpless to do anything. What if something happens to her on the way?"



Thunk. Another shovelful of dirt and rocks landed on top of the lifeless body of Olivia's husband. As she peered down into the hole, tears blurred her vision. Sweat seemed to trickle from every inch of her skin, saturating her hair and her dress. What did it matter to add her tears to the mess? The digging had been grueling, but who else was there to do it? As she'd dragged his body into the hole, her back had tried to remain rigid against the sobs that threatened to overtake her, but it hadn't worked.

Utterly alone, she knew it remained her duty to give Hezekiah a decent burial. And with every shovelful of dirt, her shoulders weighed down with one very agonizing thought. She hadn't been a decent wife.

Oh, on the outside she had done her wifely duties. But inside? She'd done nothing but whine and complain. She hadn't respected him. She hadn't even truly loved him. While Hezekiah had been a

handsome man, she could only admit to being drawn to him for his looks. And that made her very sad. How had she not seen more? Rather than nitpicking in her thoughts about all his flaws, she should have been looking for his good traits.

It all amounted to one fact: She wasn't deserving of the husband she'd had for a mere six weeks. God had deemed fit to leave her alone because of it. First her parents had died. Then her husband. On top of that, the blame for her husband's death rested squarely on her shoulders. What would Daniel think of her now? The thought made her feel even more alone.

She was left with a wagon and two horses and a load of gold-digging supplies. Not a penny to her name. Not an ounce of food left. And no idea how far she might be from town. Could she even drive the wagon? She'd never done that by herself.

As she neared the completion of her task, her heart ached worse than her muscles, which screamed in agony. She'd failed. Again.

By the time the hole was filled in and mounded with dirt, the day was almost over. Olivia covered the mound with rocks and hoped she'd done an adequate job. It was the best she could do. Standing at the edge of the grave, her hands on the handle of the shovel, she took a deep breath and realized she'd done nothing for a service. No prayer. Nothing. As she wracked her brain for words to say, the only thing that came to mind was her favorite psalm. Through her tears, she recited the verses:

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

“He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

“He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of