

## Chapter 2

Josiah, Adam, Violet and Caroline arrive at Hartford Manor—Johnny Bishop and Jessica now married—Josiah notes changes in the household—

## Return to Harford Manor

The wagon, made of wood and old-looking, came creaking up the road from Beacon Hill and stopped in front of Hartford Manor. Josiah, riding alongside on the horse he had named Erasmus, thought it was a shame they couldn't have arrived in some something more elegant than this rather sad-looking, decrepit wagon and this ill-favored horse. At least we're home, he thought, and that's what matters most.

He got off Erasmus, patted the horse's neck and held the reins firmly before tying them to the wagon. Erasmus had a habit of wandering away if he got the chance. Josiah looked at the house, all four stories of it. I'm not going to leave again, he said to himself. This is the second time I've come back home after being gone for a year or more. I don't want to keep doing this.

Violet had been riding in the uncomfortable back of the wagon along with her sister Caroline. When Adam, who was driving, called "Whoa," to the two horses in front of him and brought the wagon to a reluctant halt, she shook Caroline gently by the shoulder, for she had fallen asleep on the Lexington Road. When her eyes opened Violet said, "Caroline, look! We're here!" She then scrambled out of the wagon and ran joyously to Josiah and flung both her arms around him.

"It's beautiful," she said, crying big tears of delight. "Caroline!" she called. "Look! This is where we are going to live."

Caroline did not seem as pleased as her sister was. When Josiah and Violet helped her out of the wagon she stretched herself and said, "Oh, thank God. I am so stiff and sore I don't think I could stand any more being jostled around that way." She glanced indifferently at Hartford Manor.

Adam jumped down and pushed his big round hat back further on his head. "Whoo-ee!" he said. "I'd almost forgotten how big this place is. It's a regular palace, ain't it?"

A window on the second floor opened up and Walter Hartford put his head out. "Well I don't believe it! It's really you at long last. I'll be right there."

A moment later the two big front doors were thrown open and Walter burst out. He wore the blue and gold uniform of an officer in the Continental Army and seemed to have gotten bigger since the last time Josiah saw him.

"We'd almost given up on you," he said, shaking hands with Josiah and Adam. "Where the hell have you been?"

"Where is everyone else?" Josiah asked.

"They're on their way," Walter promised, and a moment later their sister Jessica appeared, followed by a man named Johnny Bishop, the chief carpenter at Hartford Ships. What in the world is he doing here? Josiah wondered.

"What on earth!" she exclaimed. "The last we heard you were leaving Mary Louise's house in New Jersey last February."

"I guess you could say we took the long ride home, Miss Jessica," Adam said. "It's good to see you again."

"It's Mrs. Bishop now, Bigelow," Johnny Bishop said, stepping forward to stand next to Jessica in a possessive manner, as if to say 'This woman is mine and no one else's.' He put his arm around Jessica's shoulders, and Josiah couldn't help but notice the way his sister frowned when he did so.

"You two, married?" he asked incredulously.

"We have a new brother-in-law," Walter said, using a tone that indicated he wasn't altogether happy with this new arrangement in their lives.

The new brother-in-law now took his arm off Jessica and came forward to shake hands. "Welcome back, Josiah," he said fawningly. "Life in Boston ain't been the same without you."

Awfully familiar now, aren't we? Josiah thought. I was always Mr. Hartford to you before now. And what in the hell was Jessica doing, marrying the likes of him?

"Is this Violet?" Walter asked.

"I'm glad you remember me, Walter," she said.

"How could I forget? You helped us escape from that British hell-hole. I'll always be grateful to you for that."

"Who do we have here?" Jessica said, smiling at Violet and Caroline.

Josiah quickly introduced them, then said, "Let's all go inside, it's getting cold standing out here. How is Mother?"

"She's the same," Jessica said, unable to keep the sadness out of her voice. "But Little Josiah is growing like a weed."

"Where is my son?" That's another reason I have to stay home, he thought, to take care of him.

"Marie just put him down for a nap."

"Marie?"

"The nurse we hired to look after Little Josiah and Mother."

"What happened to the other nurse? Bell? She was doing a good job."

"We let her go," Johnny Bishop broke in. "She just wasn't working out. You know how those people are, lazy, most of them, unwilling to do a lick of work unless somebody forces them to. And," he went on in a I-know-you'll-understand-manner, "something about a Negro woman giving milk to a white child made me uneasy. It just struck me wrong."

Johnny Bishop was not only being too familiar, he was also making decisions on how the household was run. Josiah didn't like the way he said, "Those people," and he had a bad feeling that Bell had been let go due to the color of her skin. This was shown further as they entered the house and a small black boy appeared alongside Elias, the Hartford's butler.

"Toby," Bishop said sharply, "you go out front and see to their horses and wagon. And be quick about it, boy."

That is not the way the Hartfords treat their servants, Josiah thought. Before he could say anything he found himself being embraced by Elias, who was openly weeping.

"Master Josiah, I don't know how much more of you going away and then showing up again out of nowhere these old bones of mine can stand," he said. He had aged a great deal since the last time Josiah saw him. His hair was now a vivid white, contrasting with his dark skin, and his eyes were tired.

"No need to worry, Elias," he said soothingly. "I'm not going anywhere now. I'm staying right here."

"I'm so glad," Elias said. "So, so glad."

"You can be glad later, Elias," Johnny Bishop said. "For now, you need to get yourself out in front and help Toby. Get moving now." He smiled uncertainly at Josiah, as if wondering how much he could get away with. Josiah looked at him sternly. This is something I will have to fix, he thought.

He cast his eyes at the ornate drawing room, which was the first thing someone saw when they entered Hartford Manor. The two staircases, one on either side, the high, hanging crystal chandeliers, the beautiful portraits of the Hartford Family on the walls. He thought of his old room on the fourth floor and his father's study and observatory, probably unused since that terrible day in 1776 when the British took Benjamin and Walter away.

As everyone began sitting down Adam slapped Walter on the shoulder.

"Look at you, youngster," he said. "Is that a lieutenant's uniform I see?"

"It sure is," Walter said proudly.

"Good thing we aren't in the army anymore, Josiah," Adam said. "We'd have to salute this guy."

"Why aren't you with the army?" Josiah asked.

"I talked Colonel Prescott into giving me leave, seeing that I had been gone for so long. I left just as the army was heading to a place called Valley Forge, in Pennsylvania. General Washington means to spend the winter there. He's even brought in a Prussian, Baron von Steuben, to train the men European style. I'm going to miss out on that, but I don't mind. It's worth it to be home, I'd been gone since the accursed Brits took Father and me away."

Jessica, sidling up to Josiah, asked in a whisper, "Who are they?" meaning Violet and Caroline.

"I'll explain later," he whispered back. He had always liked his sister, and never hesitated to be frank with her, but now, seeing whom she had married in his absence—he decided he had to be careful with what he said to her.

"Everyone," he said, "may I present Miss Violet Dos Santos and her sister, Caroline Dos Santos, formerly of New Orleans, now of Boston, Massachusetts."

"This house is so beautiful," Violet said. "I can't wait to see the rest of it."

She and Caroline sat on a small sofa, Caroline sitting very close to her sister. She was the elder of the two, Josiah knew, but she behaved as if she were far younger and clung to Violet the way a child clings to her mother.

Oak logs burned away in the huge fireplace, crackling and sometimes shooting sparks when a knot caught fire. Walter was grateful for the warmth it offered. Now he felt he had to repeat the question that was on everyone's mind.

"What the devil took you so long to get back? The last anyone heard was that you three were leaving Daniel and Mary Louise's farm and going to Philadelphia to find a ship to bring you home. What happened?"

"It's a long, long story," Josiah said.

"Yes, way too long to tell at one sitting," said Violet.

"You said Mother is still the same?" asked Josiah.

"Yes. At times she seems to be coming out of her shell, but then she goes right back to the way she was."

"What is wrong with her?" Caroline asked. For the first time she appeared to be listening to what was being said.

"Last year, before the British left Boston, some soldiers came here and took my father and Walter away," Jessica explained. "They were led by a British Army Captain named Hugo Chamberlain. Hugo had been like family to us. Our mother often called him her seventh child. His turning on us this way—it was a shock she couldn't cope with. Since that day she's hardly moved or spoken."

Jessica paused, and wiped her eyes.

"The poor thing," said Caroline.

"Now she just sits in her room on the second floor," Jessica went on. "She's barely aware of anything that goes on."

"How sad," Caroline said. "How very, very sad. At least your mother is alive. Ours is dead, and so is our father."

"We can tell them about that another time," Violet interjected quickly.

"Did you ever see this Hugo guy again?" Johnny Bishop asked. He felt left out of the conversation and wanted to be part of it. After all, he was part of the family now, just as good as anyone else.

"Josiah let him live," Walter said, with just a trace of bitterness in his voice.

"You saw Hugo again?" Jessica said. "When was this?"

"At the Princeton battle, last January," Walter explained. "We took him and a lot of other Brits prisoner."

"Your brother challenged him to a fight to the death, with swords," Adam said. "It was the best sword fight you ever saw."

"At the end Josiah had his sword point right at Hugo's throat. He could have killed him easy. But he didn't."

"Why didn't you?" asked Jessica, almost angry now. "After what he did to us—he certainly deserved to die."

Josiah waited a moment before answering. "I thought it best to let him live."

"So you told him to go and sin no more," Bishop said. He evidently thought this a funny comment, for he laughed and looked about, as if he expected everyone else to laugh too. No one did, and he looked disappointed.

"You never told me about this," said Violet.

"No need," said Josiah.

"Where is Hugo now?" asked Jessica. "Still a prisoner?"

"God knows," said Josiah.

"He was swapped in a prisoner exchange," said Walter. "Colonel Prescott told me."

"How are Charles and Ann?" Josiah asked.

"Charles will be at the yard now. Speaking of which, I should get over there myself. It doesn't look good for the yardmaster to not come to work."

"Yardmaster?" Josiah asked.

"Yes, it's a new position we created," Bishop said. "Are the men ever gonna be glad when they hear you are back, Josiah. It hasn't been the same without you. You're goin' to stay this time, aren't you? Not gonna go running off to the war again, I hope."

"I'm done with the war," Josiah said. He was looking forward to returning to the shipyard.

"Hey boy," Bishop called to Toby. "Saddle my horse and be quick about it. What are we paying you for? Get moving now." He strode self-importantly out of the room.

"When did we decide we needed a 'yardmaster?'" Josiah asked.

"We've gotten so busy, we felt we had to make some adjustments," Jessica explained. There was little conviction in her voice. It sounded as if she was trying to justify something she knew wasn't true.

"And he's living here now?"

"He's my husband, Josiah."

"Josiah, Caroline isn't feeling well," Violet said. "Is there a place she can lay down?"

"I can take care of that," Jessica offered. "Come with me you two. I'll show you to a bedroom on the second floor that isn't being used."

The three women headed toward the stairs on the far side of the room. Josiah noticed that Adam was gone. "He's in the kitchen, making nice with Maureen," Walter said with a knowing look. "I think he's got a yen for her. Who is the other one?" he said in a lower voice and edging closer to his brother. "I knew you'd be bringing Violet, but this Caroline—who is she?"

"Violet's sister. She's poorly. We found her by accident in a tavern on the Wilderness Road, in Kentucky. We rescued her and brought her along with us. Some bad things happened to her."

"What kind of things?"

"Things that should never happen to anyone."

"Do you intend for them to live here?"

"Definitely."

"Well, what about Mercy?"

"What about her?"

"She thinks you're going to marry her. That's what she tells everyone."

"That isn't possible," Josiah declared.

"At least tell me how in the hell you came to be on the Wilderness Road in Kentucky?"

"It's a long, long story," Josiah said. "I would hardly know where to begin."

Jessica now came down the stairs and came over to join them. They pulled their chairs closer together and the feeling became intimate, three siblings together who hadn't been able to converse this way for a long time.

"I've got them settled down in the room next to Mother's," she reported. Her face was serious, and she appeared to have aged a lot since the last time Josiah saw her. "It doesn't take a genius to figure out what is going on between you and Violet, Josiah. You are lovers, obviously. But what about Mercy?"

"I just asked him that," said Walter.

There was one question Josiah had been dreading. But he knew he had to ask it, so he said, "How is Mercy?"

"She's been here off and on," Jessica said, "asking if there was any word from you, looking in to see how Mother and Little Josiah are doing."

Jessica took Josiah's question as expressing a wish to see Mercy. His real reason, however, was his unease at what would happen when Mercy met Violet.

"Several men have been courting her," Jessica went on, "but she's turned them all away, always saying she's waiting for you to come home. Roger Macefield has been the most persistent."

"Roger Macefield?" Josiah asked.

"Yes. Do you know him?"

"Slightly. He was at Harvard when I was there. He wasn't someone that Mercy would be happy with. Not too smart. He's one of those people whose conversation doesn't amount to anything more than telling the same jokes over and over."

There came the sound of footsteps and two young women appeared. Both were dressed in maid's uniforms. "Charlotte, Brandi," Jessica signaled to them. "Come here. You need to meet Mr. Josiah Hartford. He's the owner of Hartford Manor."

Both girls did a kind of curtsy. Charlotte appeared to be the older of the two, and she smiled shyly and said, "So pleased to make your acquaintance, Mr. Hartford."

The other, Brandi, was much more outgoing. She had a bold expression, and after saying she too was pleased to make Mr. Hartford's acquaintance, she said, "You're the other one who's been off fighting the war. I'm so glad to meet you and so grateful to be here working for you." She looked Josiah daringly in the eye, to the point where he



was slightly taken aback. It was a look that said, 'I'm yours if you want to come and get me.' She was a pretty little thing, Josiah thought, but what cheek, to look at me that way.

He turned to the other girl now, Charlotte, who was somewhat plain and a bit on the chubby side—not obese, but she would definitely be fat later in life. She did not meet his eye but kept looking steadily downward. Josiah made a gesture of dismissal.

"All right, run along," Jessica told them. "I'm sure you must have work to do."

"Since when did we need two maids?" Josiah asked. "One was always enough."

"It was Johnny's idea," Jessica said. "We hired Charlotte to take Alice's place. After we got married, Johnny noticed Charlotte could use some help. He knows Brandi's family—they've fallen on hard times, so we decided to help them out by giving her a job here."

"And the stableboy, this Toby—was that Bishop's idea too?"

"Elias is getting old and feeble, Josiah. He could use someone to help him, both in the house and outside."

Josiah made no comment, but it troubled him that Johnny Bishop had gotten so involved with the affairs of the Hartford household. He didn't want to be snobbish, but still Jessica—daughter of Benjamin and Martha Hartford, married to a carpenter? It did not feel right. He decided to hold his tongue for now.

"What about Adam?" Jessica wanted to know. "Is he going to stay here too?"

"Adam? No, I expect Adam will be going back to his farm near Bedford in a day or two. We've traveled so far it'll take us all a few days to get grounded again."

That night Josiah slept in his old room on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of Hartford Manor. He waited and waited for Violet to come to him, but she never did, and the next day she told him that her sister was having nightmares and fits of panic to the point where she couldn't leave her side, even for a moment. Josiah did not sleep well. He had much on his mind.