

LABOR'S PERIL

By Edith Maxwell

In chapbook accompanying

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Author Note: *A couple of years ago I learned that George Edwin McNeill was called the Father of the Eight-Hour Work Day. He was born in Amesbury and had worked in the textile mills as a child, going out on strike at age 12 with others to protest the working conditions and pay. He went on to be a long-long labor activist. I knew I wanted to include him in a Rose Carroll story. "Labor's Peril" alternates point of view between Rose and her niece Faith Bailey.*

I, Rose Carroll, was worried about Hattie Webster, during this summer of 1888. Only sixteen, she was expecting her baby soon. All knees and elbows, Hattie lived in a run-down farmhouse in Amesbury with Nell, her tired-looking mother. When I gently asked about the baby's father that Seventh Day afternoon, Nell had snorted.

"Really, Miss Carroll? She's a young girl with nary a ring on her fingers. Do you think the baby's father cares?" Nell left the bedroom.

"I'm starting to have pains, Rose," Hattie said. "Is the baby coming right now?"

"Thy body is not quite ready to give birth, Hattie. But it will be in the next week or two, I feel safe to say."

"How do you know?" Her tone was plaintive.

"I'm a midwife, dear. I have helped many a wee one come along safely, and I know the signs."

In her case, not all of the signs pleased me. This young mother-to-be was far too thin, with a uterus measuring undersized for so late in pregnancy. The well for the house sat close to the barn where the household kept a few scrawny cows and a pack of hungry-looking pigs. I wasn't sure if the water was safe to drink. At least the house was clean enough, if shabby. And the baby's heartbeat sounded strong.

"Does thee drink milk from the cow regularly?" I asked.

"She ain't giving any lately. Pappy sold off the calf."

Oh, dear. "I haven't met thy father yet."

"No, he's been away a bit." She didn't meet my gaze as she swallowed. "Rose, I'm scared of dying."

"I will do everything in my power to make sure thee and thy child have a safe passage. Now, try to take gentle walks in the fresh air, and eat all thee is able." I stood and packed my tape measure and Pinard horn into my birthing satchel. "Thee will be fine."

On my way through the kitchen, I spoke to Nell as she stood at the washtub peeling potatoes. "Please make sure she eats enough. Do summon me when her pains have come regularly for an hour or more."

She nodded curtly. "Not sure how we're going to feed another mouth around here. Maybe you Quakers can help."

I smiled, not really meaning it, and let myself out, resolved to instruct our milk delivery boy to also leave a quart at the farmhouse every morning for the time being.

A human-sized shape in the rushing waters of the Powow River's lower falls stained the white foam red on the last First Day of the month. It disappeared around a rock, surfaced, slid under. Faith Bailey watched half-hidden behind the corner of the four-story carriage factory building until the dismal carcass was out of sight around a bend in the river. She glanced across the falls to where the man had stood. He was gone, too.

As she hurried along Water Street in bustling Amesbury, Massachusetts, holding her muted-green skirts up off the manure-strewn cobblestones, the bile that had risen in her throat at witnessing the horrific deed still stung the back of her mouth. Her hands were cold despite the warm Sixth Month day. She arrived at her best friend Annie Beaumont's tenement and trudged up the stairs to the third floor. "Bonjour, Faith." Annie's mother greeted her at the door of the crowded flat, which smelled deliciously of frying onions and meat. "Annie, Faith *est là*," she called out behind her. Annie's dotty *grandmère* sat in her rocking chair near the coal stove, and the youngest in the family, a toddler of two, played on the braided rug.

Annie's head appeared behind her mother's, the seventeen-year-old's red curls loose on her shoulders.

"What is it, *chérie*?" Annie asked.

"Can thee come out and talk?"

Annie stared at Faith. "You're pale. Something bad has happened."

Faith nodded once. Something very bad had indeed happened.

Annie conferred in her Canadian-accented French with her mother. “*Maman* wants you to eat Sunday dinner with us first.”

Faith shook her head. “Please thank her, but I can’t. My family expects me home.”

“All right.” Annie stepped out and shut the door behind her. “Let’s talk down there.” She headed toward the small window at the end of the hall.

Faith checked the narrow hallway to make sure it was empty of eavesdroppers. “I think I witnessed a murder, or very nearly. I heard a cry. As I came around the corner of Wing & Company, I witnessed a man pushing a bleeding fellow into the river.”

Annie’s breath rushed in with a rasp. “That’s awful. You poor thing.” She stroked Faith’s arm.

“I know Aunt Rose has viewed the bodies of murder victims before, but I have not.” Her voice shook. “I can’t imagine he survived, if he was even alive when he fell.”

“Did you recognize the man who did the pushing?”

“Not exactly. But...” Her voice trailed off.

“But what?”

“Thee knows how Silas Hoyt always wears his cap tilted back on his head?”

Annie nodded, big-eyed.

“This person did, too. He was stocky like Silas.” She scrunched her eyes closed, remembering. Then she stared at Annie. “And he wore a patch on the left elbow of his sack coat.”

Annie shook her head. “He’s a bad one, that Silas. My brother Jean likes to play ball with one of the younger Hoyt boys.”

“Luke does, too.” Faith’s younger brother was fast friends with the other two fourteen-year-olds.

“Jean says Silas is cruel to all kinds of small animals.” Annie tapped a finger on her cheek. “Doesn’t he have a twin brother?”

“That’s right, in fact, they’re identical twins. I haven’t seen the brother about town lately, though. I wonder if he’s ill.”

“What’s the twin’s name?”

“Samuel, I think.” Faith frowned. “I need to go to the police. Make a report about the body in the river and tell them what I think.”

“I agree. Because, whether it was Silas or not, what if this man kills again? No one is safe.”

Faith shuddered. “I will tell Kevin Donovan.”

“Rose has worked with that detective to solve murders,” Annie said. “That’s a good idea.”

Faith’s aunt, Rose Carroll, was a midwife, but she had become involved in solving more than one murder in the past.

“Kevin has come to our house several times,” Faith said. “He’s quite a nice man.” She gazed out at a crow perched on the arch over one of the windows of a tall brick factory next door. The sound of a nearby church bell tolling once floated in the open window at the end of the hall. “I must run,” she said. “We’ll talk tomorrow while we work.” The two seventeen-year-olds worked at the Hamilton Mills together, although both had their sights set on different occupations. Faith was determined to become a writer, and Annie had plans to apprentice herself to Rose so she could learn the trade of midwifery.

Annie laughed. "We'll talk in that din?"

"Thee is right." In fact the noise from the mill machinery was deafening. "On our break we can talk."

Her friend's eyes widened. "I forgot to tell you. After mass this morning, I heard that the mill boys are going on strike tomorrow. I think we should join them."

"They have just cause, as do we. But what if we all lose our positions?"

Annie pointed her finger at Faith. "Then it will be an omen, a sign, for us to pursue our chosen careers, *mon amie*. Why should we wait any longer?"

Faith was already late for First Day dinner at home, but first she needed to make the detour past the police station. She ran up the broad front steps and pulled open the heavy door.

"Yes, miss?" A young officer, not much older than her, stood at a battered wooden counter. One of the new telephones sat on a desk behind him, and the air smelled of men: Macassar hair oil, tobacco, and a hint of sweat, with a backdrop of burnt coffee.

Faith pulled herself up to her full five feet eight inches and spoke in her most serious tone. "I need to speak with Detective Kevin Donovan on a matter of some urgency." It was hard to persuade men to take her, a young lady of nearly eighteen, seriously. But if she was to have a career as a reporter, she needed to adopt a manner that would ensure the world she was capable.

"It's the Lord's Day, miss. Unless he's hot on a case, Donovan will be at home with his family. Did you have something to report?"

"Yes. I believe I witnessed a murder a little while ago."

"Did you, now?" He cocked his head and regarded her with more interest.

She nodded. "I was on Water Street at the gap between the two Wing & Company factory buildings." She spoke fast so her voice wouldn't falter at the memory. "I heard a cry and looked across the falls. A stocky young fellow pushed a bleeding man into the Powow River."

The policeman drew out a sheet of paper and a pencil. "Slow down a bit, miss. Please give me your name and the location of your residence to start the report."

"Faith Bailey of Center Street."

He peered at her gloved hands. "Would you be a Mrs. or a Miss?"

"Miss. I live with my father, my aunt, and my younger brothers and sister."

"I see." He squinted at her. "Is your aunt Rose Carroll?"

She smiled. "Yes."

"She's a sharp one, Miss Carroll is. You must take after her." He cleared his throat.

"Could you identify the man who did the deed, Miss Bailey?"

"I'm not sure. A tree blocked my view of his face, and he turned away immediately after that. I watched the person in the river for a moment. When I looked back, the man on shore was gone. But he was of a sturdy build, as I said, and wore a cap pushed back on his head. I think I caught sight of a patch on the left elbow of his sackcloth jacket."

The policeman laboriously scribbled notes. "I see." He licked the pencil lead and glanced up. "Where do you reckon the man went in?"

"The spot where I stood is opposite Mill Street."

"We'll take a look. I thank you for being an alert citizen."

Clearly she was being dismissed. "Thee will let the detective know, then? And someone must search for the person who went in. I can't imagine he survived the attack, but one never knows."

“Right away.”

After Faith and I finished cleaning up after First Day dinner, she donned her bonnet.

“I think I will go for a stroll. Would thee like to accompany me, Rose?”

“I would.” I slipped on my own bonnet and set out with her.

As we walked, she relayed to me what she had witnessed that morning, as well as what Annie had said about the mill workers going on strike.

“The idea of striking is an uneasy one, Rose. Annie and I might lose our jobs. And the matter of what I witnessed at the falls presses heavy on my heart and my mind.”

“I thought thee seemed preoccupied during our meal.”

At dinner Luke had confirmed he didn't much like Silas Hoyt. Faith had asked him about the twin brother, and he'd said he thought Samuel was suffering from brain sickness.

“Faith, thee knows I often take counsel with Friend John Whittier,” I said. “Our famous abolitionist and poet lives nearby. Shall we pay him a call?” I felt confident he would advise Faith in these matters, even if it were no more than the three of us praying silently together.

“Let's.”

As we waited several minutes later to cross busy Friend Street, full with carriages and buggies carrying families in their First Day best, the back of my neck prickled as if someone had eyes on me—or perhaps watching Faith. I glanced sharply to my right, catching a glimpse of a man darting behind a blacksmith shop. A man with a patch on the elbow of his jacket.

Faith must have felt the same prickle. In three strides she was at the side of the shop, but the man had disappeared. Behind the shop was a warren of sheds and shacks. She took a step but hesitated and turned back to where I stood.

“That man wasn’t necessarily Silas,” she said. “Plenty of fellows down on their luck wear patched jackets.”

“True.” I knocked on the door of John’s modest white home a minute later. His housekeeper showed us shown into his study. John already had a visitor, though, a congenial-looking man with a full bushy beard, a bald pate on top, and eyes that twinkled as much as John’s.

“Welcome, Rose and Faith,” John said. “This is George Edwin McNeill, a true friend of the working class. George, Rose Carroll and her niece, Faith Bailey. are fellow members of Amesbury Friends Meeting.”

We each shook the man’s hand and sat when John invited us to. I’d heard of George McNeill from both Faith and Annie. He’d been born in Amesbury and had led an early strike of children in the factories nearly forty years earlier when he was only fifteen. Now he lobbied hard for the eight-hour workday and insurance for industrial workers like my niece. To meet the great man in person was unexpected.

“What brings thee here today, Rose?” John tented his fingers and gazed at me over his snowy white chinstrap beard.

“It is Faith who might wish for some consultation with thee,” I said.

“I see. Is it for more encouragement on thy dream of working as a writer?” John smiled at her.

She swallowed. “No. Well, maybe. I’m employed at the Hamilton Mills, George,” she explained to the man.

He didn't look a bit taken aback by her use of his first name, but then he was John's friend. He would already be accustomed to Quakers dispensing with titles because of our belief in equality.

"My friend Annie says a strike is planned for tomorrow," Faith began. "I confess to some nervousness about such a protest, John, and I wanted to take thy counsel on the matter."

John glanced at George and nodded.

"The strike is why I came to town," the labor proponent said. "That and the chance to have a chat with my friend here, of course. The strike will go forward. The lower-level workers at the mill are neither paid a fair wage nor assigned a humane number of hours for their work."

Both were certainly true.

"Surely the owner will not be happy with us leaving our posts and walking out," Faith leaned forward in her seat.

"No, he won't, as the previous owner wasn't when we walked out," George said. "I was younger than you at the time, and we were all sacked. But things have changed. A peaceful demonstration by a sizable number of employees can be an effective tool for change."

"George Fox called upon us to speak truth to power, Faith," John said, referring to the founder of the Religious Society of Friends.

I'd always liked the ring of that exhortation. I was sure Faith did, too.

She sat up straighter. "I will participate."

Poor Hattie was laboring hard by five the next morning. I'd been summoned to her labor, as often happens, just as I prepared to retire on First Day evening. A boy rapped hard at the front door and shoved a note at me. Thirty minutes later I'd hurried into the Webster farmhouse. Her

mother had shown me clean cloths and water, and then said she was going to stuff cotton wool in her ears and go to bed. I was surprised at her lack of caring but did not contest her decision.

Hattie had been stoical for hours. Now she began whimpering.

"Hattie, crying will not help." I kept my voice gentle. "Try to lie back between pains and rest. Thee will need all thy strength when it comes time to push."

"But it hurts so much, Rose. And I'm scared."

"I know. Labor is always a peril. But thee will do well. Women's bodies are made for this work. Now, attempt to rest." I wiped her forehead with a damp cloth. I was concerned at the labor starting so soon. Given the size of Hattie's womb, the infant could have used all the extra time it could get growing safely inside her. But that was not to be, and I would not share my worries with her.

Another pain set in soon enough. "Curse you, Silas Hoyt," Hattie wailed.

I froze for a second. That was the brute Faith believed had killed a man and pushed him onto the rocky falls. I waited until Hattie's pain had passed.

"Is Silas the father of thy baby?" I murmured.

"He attacked me, Rose. He forced himself on me in the barn, as if I was an animal. But *he's* the animal."

"Does he know thee is carrying his child?"

"I told him. He laughed in my face and called me a whore, said it could be anyone's baby. But it isn't! I never did it with any other fellow."

"Was he courting thee?"

"Of course not. He came to buy the calf." She let out a long guttural moan.

I knew what that sound meant. "Hold back from pushing for a moment, Hattie. Let me check thee." I quickly washed my hands and knelt on the bed, inserting my hand in her passage, feeling for the opening. And what I felt was hair. I slid my hand out. "Thy baby's head is already emerging. When thee next feels the urge to push, give it all thy energy."

I slid a towel under her and had another at the ready. Both were threadbare but clean. I always worked with what the family provided.

She grabbed her knees and pushed. After two more pushes, the baby's head slid out. Its eyes were closed. I cleared the nostrils with my pinky finger.

"Give me one more strong push, now, when thee feels the contraction."

A moment later I held a tiny baby girl in my hands. She couldn't weigh more than five pounds. But she was limp and not breathing. My heart sank as I went to work. I rubbed her little body firmly all over with the towel. I slapped her cheeks. I held her by her heels and gave her back a couple of taps.

Throughout, Hattie was silent, watching.

My labors were to no avail. After I tied and cut the cord, I wrapped her daughter in the clean towel and stood.

"Is she dead?" Hattie whispered.

"I'm so very sorry. She was too small and weak to make it." I'd experienced death at births before. It was sadly a fact of life in our world. But having a baby expire was the very worst part of my profession, and I couldn't let myself grieve until after my job here was finished. I handed Hattie the small, still package.

She stroked her daughter's cheek, her dark hair. A tear rolled down Hattie's face, but she didn't dissolve into weeping. She glanced up at me.

“It’s probably for the better, Rose. She would have grown up poor, with only me to love her. And some other man might have brutalized her, taken her virginity. This way she’ll stay perfect--and safe.”

True. But it was a terrible wisdom this girl barely out of childhood had professed.

“I’m going to name her Amelia,” Hattie went on. “I’ve always loved that name. Don’t you think it’s musical?”

“It’s indeed a lovely name. Will thee bury her here on the farm?”

She nodded, gazing down at the lifeless infant in her arms. “I know just the spot, up on the hill behind the barn.”

“Good.”

Hattie delivered the afterbirth easily and didn’t bleed. I cleaned her up and straightened the bed. I also advised her on binding her breasts when the milk came in. As she was so thin and with a baby that arrived early, I doubted she would have much trouble suppressing the milk.

Nell made a brief appearance, *tsking* about the death, but smoothing her daughter’s hair in the only affectionate gesture from her I’d witnessed.

Faith and Annie met outside mill number two on Second Day shortly before seven as they’d planned. Workers carrying tin lunch buckets streamed past them into the big brick building. Girls like Faith and Annie, boys their age and younger, older women who did skilled stitching, and men both wizened and prosperous worked in this industry. The mills were powered here in the upper mill yard by the Powow River, which dropped dozens of feet in elevation in a quarter mile’s distance. It was tamed by millraces and diversions, making the water rush through

the huge turbines that powered the mills before rejoining the primary river on the rocks of the lower falls.

“Did thee hear anything more about the strike?” Faith whispered.

Annie gave a nod. “We’re going to join the boys. Watch for my signal.”

“Do we just walk out and stay away? Or make a statement and then return to our posts?”

Annie fixed her green eyes on her friend. “Faith, we are demonstrating for better working hours, conditions, and pay. We stay away until they grant our demands. That’s what a strike is.”

“How will the owner know what we want?” Faith swallowed, her nerves rising up again.

“We drew up a list last night. And we made placards.” Annie’s eyes shone. “Mr. McNeill will bring them to us at eight o’clock.”

Faith glanced at her in surprise. “Does thee know him?”

“I met him yesterday.”

“I did, as well. He was visiting John Whittier when I paid him a call.”

“I found him an inspiration,” Annie said. She frowned. “Did you have success informing the police about...” She glanced to both sides and cupped her hand around her mouth. “About the murder?”

“I left a report at the station. I wasn’t able to obtain a newspaper this morning to see if the detective had any luck. I wonder who the poor fellow was, the one who went in.” Faith shook her head in sadness.

The mill’s horn blared, scolding them for not already being inside at their looms. The girls exchanged a glance and hurried to their stations.

Inside conversation was nearly impossible because of the racket of the long turning shafts overhead and the racing belts that powered hundreds of looms. Faith took her place at the two

looms she managed, checked that they had sufficient full spindles at hand, and flipped the levers. Her machines joined the others, doing the work in a day it would have taken a hand weaver far longer to accomplish.

Despite the clacking and thrumming, Faith detected a different kind of noise. A buzz of excitement filled the rooms. Workers exchanged quick glances. A nervous smile here, a raised eyebrow there, a thumbs-up signal broadcast where the supervisor couldn't see it.

Jimmy Wilson brought Faith four full spindles. He was one of the runners, and like many of the other boys, about two years younger than she.

"You going on strike?" he mouthed to her, his back to the window in the elevated manager's office.

Faith gave a single nod.

"I am, too." He smiled, but a tic beat at the edge of his mouth. Jimmy had a sweet temperament, which left him prone to being taunted and pushed around by the older boys. Faith had seen Silas pick on Jimmy more than once.

Her gut roiled in anticipation of the walkout, but she resolved to be strong. For wasn't one of the prime tenets of being a Friend that all were equal in God's eyes? It was neither fair nor just for her and others to work ten or more long hours a day at low wages while the managers and owners reaped the wealth of the labor. Instead of worrying, she pondered what John and George had said the day before.

As the big clock at the end of the vast room ticked over to eight o'clock, Annie shut off her looms. Faith took a deep breath and did the same. Two more girls flipped their levers. Within a minute the clatter of the looms fell still, although overhead the axles still rotated.

Annie was nearly at the door with a long line of girls and boys behind her when the manager's megaphone bellowed.

"Return to your machines. All workers return to the looms immediately."

Annie glanced over her shoulder. She caught Faith's eye and gave two quick shakes of her head, then pushed open the door.

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I trudged homeward at a few minutes past eight on a route that led me through the upper mill yard. All I wanted to was to lie down in the privacy of my room and weep, mourning the death of a newborn. Instead, I slowed my step as I stared. Workers were amassing in the open area between Hamilton Mill number three and where the river coursed under Main Street. This must be the strike.

The mill girls and boys, plus a few women and men, formed several lines. Annie Beaumont—Faith's friend and possibly my future apprentice—seemed to be one of the ringleaders, calling to her coworkers and encouraging them in the action. I did not join the fray, standing well back, but I didn't head for home, either. If harm came to any of these hardworking employees, especially to my loved ones, I wanted to be a witness. I could also provide emergency nursing care, should it come to that. The midwifery satchel I clutched was a seemingly bottomless source of necessary supplies.

Faith stood arm in arm with the rest in the mill yard, a hundred workers strong. Her heart thudded furiously, and her throat was thick with anxiety, but she didn't budge. Few employees older than twenty had joined in. They had families to support, younger mouths to feed, and must have decided they couldn't afford the loss of a job. Annie, Jimmy, and Faith stayed together.

George McNeill and two ladies from Amesbury Friends Meeting arrived holding fat loads of placards. Soon they were distributed to one in five of the demonstrators. George was in the middle of a rousing speech directed at the owners but designed, Faith suspected, to inspire the young people. Silas Hoyt strolled up to the end of the line next to Annie, hands in his pockets, cap pushed back on his head. He worked elsewhere in the mill, but Faith wasn't sure where.

"Excellent idea, this strike. Your plan, miss?" he asked Annie.

Faith didn't like his leer.

"We're all in it together," Annie said, standing tall. "Aren't we, Faith?"

Faith nodded. When Silas's gaze drifted over to her, the look in his ice-blue eyes shot a chill through her. Had he seen her watching him push the man into the river? If so, her life could be in danger, too.

George McNeill's voice fell silent. Owner Cyrus Hamilton, flanked by four managers, emerged from the building. From the arch-covered walkway that led to Market Square approached a dozen Amesbury policemen holding the foot-long batons called truncheons. They split ranks and stood on either side of the top brass. They all stared at the strikers, who of course were unarmed, some barely out of childhood.

Faith's manager handed the owner the amplifying device.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we understand you have grievances," Hamilton began. "We will consider them in due time. I run a business, however, and can't afford to have my looms at rest. You will either return to work immediately or you will disperse from my property." He lowered the megaphone.

Faith looked to Annie for leadership.

Annie stood still, chin high. "Living wages, shorter hours," she said in a loud and clear voice. "Living wages, shorter hours, living wages, shorter hours." She kept up the rhythmic chant.

Faith joined in, as did Jimmy. George McNeill beamed at Annie and added his deep voice to the chorus. A dozen workers left the line and retreated inside the building. The rest raised their voices in unison, drowning out the manager who had taken back the megaphone and was demanding quiet.

At a command from an officer, the police raised their truncheons and marched in a line toward the demonstrators, who outnumbered them eight to one. Faith's knees shook, but she kept chanting. The police line stopped a pace from the strikers. Faith found herself face-to-face with the young officer she'd met at the police station the day before. His eyes widened. Up close she saw the cylindrical wood of his weapon with a design painted on it. He wouldn't actually hit her with it, would he?

"Disperse now or this demonstration will be broken up by force," commanded the police officer in the middle of the line, a stern older man wearing a different hat than the others.

A silent beat passed, then another. Annie's voice rang out again.

"Living wages, shorter hours." The chant grew louder up and down the line.

The head officer barked out another command. The rest of the uniformed force raised their truncheons. Faith winced, huddling into her shoulders. The scene erupted into a chaos of shoving and fighting.

Silas pushed Jimmy forward into the young officer and grabbed Faith's arm. "I saw you watching me yesterday," he growled at her. With his other hand he snicked open an automatic knife.

Faith gasped even as cries of pain arose from all around. "I didn't see anything." She spoke in a harsh whisper. She shook her head fast. She couldn't twist out of his hold no matter how hard she tried. Her throat was so thick she could barely swallow. Her heart thumped like a smithy's hammer and her feet numbed.

Jimmy butted between them. "Let go of her, Hoyt."

Annie grabbed Faith's other arm and pulled.

"Drop that knife," the young policeman ordered.

Silas didn't drop the knife.

"Jimmy," Faith cried.

I gasped when I saw what Silas was up to. It was bad enough that his proximity menaced both Faith and Annie. But a knife?

"Sy, no!" bellowed a man.

Silas let go of Faith's elbow and yanked out the knife from Jimmy's chest. The newcomer ran up and tackled Silas.

I stared. It was as if watching two copies of the same person fighting. The newcomer could only be Samuel, Silas's identical twin. The two fell to the ground. Samuel had an iron grip on Silas's knife hand, but Silas fought hard to wound his brother.

I took a step forward, but stopped. I wouldn't be able to break up the fight, and Jimmy lay beyond them.

The policeman moved in and kicked Silas's hand, knocking the knife out of it. Annie dashed to pick it up. The officer whacked at Silas with his truncheon until he ceased fighting Samuel.

Faith dropped to her knees next to Jimmy. I hurried toward them. He'd saved my niece's life. I had to try to save his. I also knelt. I grabbed my handkerchief from my pocket [of my dress] and pressed it to the bleeding slash in his shirt. I pushed down hard with both hands.

"What can I do, Rose?" Faith asked.

"Find a clean bandage or blanket in my satchel."

She handed me one. I layered it over the insufficient handkerchief and pressed anew. Blood loss is a major cause of death.

I glanced up at a new commotion. Kevin Donovan now assisted the young policeman. The detective cuffed the struggling Silas's hands behind his back, then helped Samuel to his feet. The young officer planted his foot firmly on Silas's back.

Annie handed the knife to Kevin, then knelt beside Faith and me. "How is he?"

Jimmy's face was as pale as linen and his eyes were closed. I was pressing so hard I couldn't tell if he was breathing or not.

"Feel for a pulse," I directed Annie. I didn't want to remove my hands from his wound. I closed my eyes for a moment, holding him in the Light, praying that it not yet be time for his soul to be released to God.

"He lives," Annie exclaimed. She raised her voice and called out, "We need an ambulance wagon. Hurry!"

Kevin squatted next to them. "How is the young fellow?"

"He has a bad stab wound," I said even as I continued to apply pressure. "But he's breathing, so maybe it missed his heart and lungs."

"I hope so. And good work, Miss Rose. I got Miss Bailey's report, and we've been tailing Silas Hoyt. He'd been reported more than once in the past for cruel acts. I guess that wasn't enough excitement for his sick mind."

"He also attacked a girl of sixteen and impregnated her," I murmured. "I delivered her deceased baby girl not three hours ago."

"May the Virgin Mary watch over her in heaven." Kevin crossed himself.

"That's all very well, but Silas Hoyt defiled Hattie Webster's virginity," I went on. "When she told him she was carrying his child, he refused responsibility, even calling her a whore. He lied."

Faith's nostrils flared. "What about the man in the river?"

"Didn't make it, I'm afraid," Kevin said.

"The poor fellow." Faith clasped her hands and closed her eyes.

I also held his released soul in God's Light for a moment. My prayer was interrupted by the sound of a clanging bell growing near.

"I've been following Miss Bailey," Samuel announced in a low, flat tone. "Didn't want Si to hurt her." His hands hung limp at his sides and his hair, identical to his brother's, looked untamed without a cap on his head.

"I thank thee, Samuel." Faith stood and gave him a soft smile.

He must have been the man she'd seen near the blacksmith shop. I gazed at him. He had an odd affect, but clearly whatever neurasthenia he suffered from had not damaged his sense of empathy and justice. Silas's twin would surely know how cruel his brother could be.

Two uniformed men wearing armbands with square red crosses on them ran up. They carried a canvas stretcher and one also held a bulging black satchel.

"Thank you, miss," one said. "We'll take over. Name of the victim?"

"Jimmy Wilson," Faith said. "He was stabbed in the chest."

The man thanked both of us and drew out a thick white cotton bandage. I withdrew my bloodied cloth. They bound the cut. Jimmy's eyes opened as they lifted him onto the stretcher.

"Faith, are you all right?" His voice was low and shaky.

"Yes, thanks to thee." Her voice trembled.

Annie tucked one arm through Faith's and the other through mine. She squeezed as Jimmy was carried to the waiting wagon. I glanced around. The melee had subsided. The owner had gotten his way. All the workers were gone, whether back to their posts or chased away she couldn't tell. Samuel had disappeared, too. Two officers hustled the cuffed Silas away, but not without him hurling curses at Faith, earning him a truncheon blow from one of the policemen.

"Bit of a risky business for young ladies," Kevin began. "Striking like that."

George McNeill strode up in time to hear. "But a brave and necessary action. Labor protests always involve peril. I'd like to commend you, Miss Beaumont, and you, Miss Bailey. We shall reorganize and fight for justice."

Faith turned away. "I'm not sure I can take any more justice at the moment." To Annie and me she murmured, "But I most surely have a gripping news article to write and sell."