
Polly's Prisoner

THE RIVER VALLEY ADVENTURES, BOOK 1

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TWEEN HISTORICAL FICTION/AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

History/Fiction/Ages 8+/Leavenworth, Indiana/timeline 1863.

All Scriptures taken from the King James Version.

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Polly's Prisoner

Contents:

.....

Doctor's Girl	5
Rebel Bullets	7
Love or Hate?	12
Close Call	18
A Proud Vigil	24
Prisoner Dick	30
Prestige and Porridge	35
Truce	40
Enemy Friend	47
Investigating	51

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Dedicated to my Rebel friends



The best way to destroy an
enemy is to make him a friend.

• Abraham Lincoln •

PREFACE

Doctor's Girl



Polly Andrews lives with her mother in a two-story farmhouse in the Ohio River Valley. Her father was a doctor before the War began, and Polly enjoyed helping him as patients came to him in his home-office. She even went with him to visit patients along the River Valley, but now things have changed. Papa had gone to the War, and would life ever be the same again?

Polly remembers how Papa doctored his patients, and with a little practice she began to copy him. Now, she doctors patients with Mama as the

Polly's Prisoner

Civil War rages with much bloodshed. She's even dug out a few bullets! Wow, that's gross work for an eleven year-old, but Polly is determined to continue Papa's work...even if it means digging bullets out of bloody, unconscious men.

But since news of her Pa's death reached her, she's almost at the brink of a "no-care attitude" to the lives around her until a Rebel enters into her life which threatens to open the slow-healing wound of War and resentment...

Can she forgive? Even her enemy?

CHAPTER 1

Rebel Bullets



“Girls,” Polly Andrews told the group of girls where two girls were engaged in a heated argument. “Evil communications corrupt good manners, so therefore I wish you two to stop your nonsense and let’s be sensible. There’s enough fighting going on anyhow.”

The fighting two, Tilly Adams and Trudy Mills, immediately shut their mouths and their fingers went back to work.

“Grandma Polly,” Sue Black giggled to Tilly who was sitting beside her, and Tilly rolled her eyes behind the handkerchief she was making.

Polly's Prisoner

Polly stitched intently, overhearing Sue's rude remark, and wished the War had never come. They were all gathered in Polly's front parlor today, the girls of the little backwoods town of Leavenworth, and were making handkerchiefs, pillowcases, and sheets for the boys off fighting.

Sue's remark stung Polly, but Polly didn't care now. Nothing really mattered to Polly now...now that her pa had been shot dead by a Rebel bullet, now that her cousin Paul had become a drummer in the Yankee Army and was gone now.

That old excitement was gone. Polly felt it. Mama felt it. But they were aiming to make it through somehow. Mama always told Polly that things would get better, that the War would be won, and that Paul would come back from the War like he said he would. Polly only prayed Mama was right. Papa had said he would come back from the War...but he didn't. He was dead...dead and buried in someplace in Virginia near the town called

Fredericksburg where so many on both sides had lost their lives.

1862. Bleak 1862, thought Polly as she endlessly stitched. She hoped this year would be more promising of a victory that just had to be won.

Polly's fingers grew a little stiff and her back ached her through as she stitched, but she kept at it. Luncheon never seemed farther away than today, yet Polly stitched away.



“Be back in time for supper, Polly dear,” Mama said when Polly told her she was going into the woods to relax.

“Okay Mama.” Polly reassured, skipping down the porch steps and towards the edge of the clearing where the woods began.

The shooting had stopped yesterday, and there hadn't been a single shot heard all day long so Mama

Polly's Prisoner

thought it was safe enough for Polly to go out in the woods again. It wasn't a battle that had just passed, but one of those skirmishes that happened so often in the War.

Polly wanted so bad to go in the woods again because yesterday had been spent sitting in the house all day other than running to feed the chickens, milk the cow, or grab more water. And just last night Mrs. Mills had ran over to their place right at dusk to tell them that Jake Adams had been shot dead by a Rebel bullet.

Polly had nightmares all night long about her pa, about Paul and about Jake, Tilly's oldest brother who was a scout in the Leavenworth Home Guard.

Polly flung her head back, trying to push out all those painful memories, and stopped skipping upon entering the rather dense woods. She'd be careful like she promised Mama. Things just weren't the same since the War started nearly two years ago. It was the second April since the first shot was fired at

Fort Sumter.

Polly walked carefully and looked around carefully, making sure nobody was there. She was going to her secret hide-out that only she and her doll, Lillie, knew of. It was a cedar thicket, small and quiet, nestled just above a bubbling brook where she could watch baby fawns and their mothers come to drink below her.

Fawns were fascinating she thought. They were so cute and little. Polly hoped there would be fawns drinking in that brook today. She walked towards her hide-out, quite lost in thought, when suddenly an object stood out boldly in her vision. A large, long, gray object.

CHAPTER 2

Love Or Hate?



Polly walked towards that object, wondering what in the world it could be. She crept up silently, wondering, until she was close enough to make out the object and what it was. Then, she shrank inside, wrinkling her nose in disgust. It couldn't be! It just couldn't be! But there it was, *still*.

Polly's heart speeded as she spied that *gray uniform* lying on the ground. She wanted to shoot him, that Confederate, but the gun was still at the house. She wanted to scream, but her tongue seemed to be stuck in her throat at that moment.

She wanted to run and never look at that *thing* again, but her eyes kept staring at that silent uniform on the ground.

Polly edged closer, her blue eyes wide and so scared. What if that *thing* on the ground was still alive? What if he killed her too? Then what would Mama do? Mama would be all alone, with nobody.

Polly shook her braids back and picked up a nearby heavy-looking stick. Then, she marched right up to the still form on the ground. With her stick she gently poked the soldier's back which was facing up just to see if he was really still alive. The soldier suddenly jerked and flipped over on his side and looked up, his uneven black hair sagging in his eyes, eyes that were large and deep...but scared.

Polly stepped back , startled, and her stick dropped to the ground. Then she noticed him clutching a bloody hand to his right shoulder. A flicker of pity began in her but that old resentment pulled back...a voice seemed to echo in that

Polly's Prisoner

whispering spring day, *Your pa got shot, Polly...a Rebel's bullet killed your pa.*

Polly squared her shoulders and asked evenly, "Who are you and what are you doing here?"

The soldier tried to pull himself to a sitting position but slung back to his side, breathing heavily. He looked up at Polly with a gaunt expression, "I'm Dick, Dick Lang."

"Okay," Polly crossed her arms. "But what are you doing here?"

"I lost my outfit," Dick gritted his teeth, "when I got this bullet. Can you help me, miss?"

"Why should I help you?" Polly flared. "You're just a Rebel, a murderin' Rebel. You killed my pa!"

"Miss, please," Dick's eyes pleaded. "I didn't kill your pa. When did he die anyhow?"

"Just before Christmas." Polly said with her chin up, trying not to start crying like she did every time she thought of him.

"I didn't, miss, honest." Dick defended himself

and continued holding onto his shoulder. “I just joined up in February when my ma finally let me go when I turned seventeen. Please, help me, *please?*”

Polly studied this Rebel carefully for a moment, noticing his bloody arm, the harmless look of his scared eyes, then said decidedly, “I’ll help you provided you don’t steal a thing from me or my ma when you’re well again.”

“Promise.” Dick’s face lit up with a smile.

“Can’t you get up?” Polly frowned down at him. “I don’t plan on holding you like a baby. Besides, I couldn’t carry you even if your very life depended upon it.”

“I’ll try.” Dick then scooted himself up to kneeling position. “Will you give me a hand though?”

Polly pulled on his good arm until he could stand. Dick stood a little shakily so Polly held her arm out, “I don’t usually do this to Rebels, but I’ll do it for you-even if you *are* my enemy.”

Dick leaned on her arm for support and said

Polly's Prisoner

casually, "Who said I was your enemy? I didn't."

"But you are," stated Polly solidly. "You're a Rebel and I'm a Yankee, as different as night is from day."

"But we're both Americans." Dick sighed from the pain. "We're both born in the land of the free, the home of the brave. It's just that you live in these hills of Indiana, and I came from the hills of Tennessee. We're really no different."

"Are too." Polly said stoutly. "You're going on eighteen and I'm just eleven."

"Like that has anything to do with being different," Dick grinned at Polly who was acting like their worlds were so far apart. "Actually, age is just a matter in the mind. You're trying to sound like you're eleven *hundred* years old."

"You'd better be good if you want me to take that bullet out of your arm," Polly declared with a slight frown.

"*You* take out my bullet?" Dick looked

Amber Florenza

incredulous. “You’re only eleven!”

CHAPTER 3

Close Call



“Age is just a matter in the mind.” Polly said with a slightly sarcastic tone, then grinned. “I’ve done it tons of times. Don’t worry. I do pretty good, Mama says.”

“Okay.” Dick looked a little alarmed as they came to a clearing where a two-story farmhouse came in view. “I trust you.”

“Thank you.” Polly smiled, feeling just a little bit older.

As they were walking closer to the farmhouse Mama came walking from the spring house, and when

she spied them she called with surprise, “Who’ve you got, Polly dear?”

Polly glanced at the soldier leaning on her arm who was now sweating and looking quite scared, “Just a murderin’ Rebel, Mama, but he’s sick so we gotta fix him up. I’ve decided that once he can walk around by himself he can help me around the farm.”

Dick looked down at Polly in surprise, and Mama narrowed her blue eyes, “But, Polly, I’m sure he’s got folks at home to go to. Don’t you, young man?”

“Yeah,” Dick started to say. “I’ve got my ma and a sis-”

“Nope.” Polly shook her head decidedly. “I found him and he’s *my* prisoner. If I fix him up he’ll be indebted to me so he has to stay and help me until Paul gets back from drumming. Better than a prison-camp, isn’t it?”

Polly looked up at Dick, “Isn’t it?”

“It is,” Dick nodded. “Can you get me into the house, please?”

Polly's Prisoner

"Of course," Polly began walking again. "Mama, could you please get the sofa fixed for my prisoner?"

"Yes, Polly dear." Mama went into the house with her pail of water.

Dick looked down at Polly with an amused expression, "So, I'm your prisoner, huh?"

"Yep," Polly nodded seriously, "and you'd better not run away either!"

"I won't," Dick couldn't hide his grin. "Sure a small captor!"

"Small is mighty," Polly said with an important air. "Besides, I'm not finished growing yet."

Dick nodded and grunted slightly as they walked up the porch steps. They entered the house and Mama was already there by the sofa, setting it up with blankets and fluffing up pillows.

"Here we are, prisoner." Polly brightly announced and left Dick at the sofa.

Polly hurried over to the donated-clothes-box which was in the corner of the room, and rummaged

through the clothes meant for the wounded soldiers who were tended here. She finally grabbed a large shirt that looked big enough for her prisoner.

“Whew!” Polly came back to the sofa with a relieved air. “We can finally get rid of that dirty old Rebel jacket! Here, sit up just a little.”

Hearing no response Polly looked at Dick’s face. It was chalky gray and he was breathing quite heavily. “Mama, Mama! Quick! Dick’s getting bad!”

Mama hurried into the room with a bowl of steaming water and a towel. “Quick, Polly,” Mama looked concerned. “Grab me the knife and bring me the bandages. Batch up the poultice. Hurry! We have no time to lose.”

Polly’s thoughts whirled. *We have to save him! Get the roots stirring. Grab the knife. Where’s the knife? Here’s the bandages. Thank God, all set. Now, here goes the poultice.*

When Polly had given Mama the needed knife and bandages she gave the roots another stir. It was

Polly's Prisoner

now boiling so she carefully brought the pot of poultice to the back parlor where Mama was tending Dick.

"I got the bullet out of him, Polly." Mama looked scared. "It looks pretty bad. Quick, give me that poultice."

Polly nodded numbly and handed Mama the pot, and then sat down on the sofa's arm, feeling a little faint. Dick's breathing was shallow now and his face even grayer.

"Is he...going to be alright?" Polly's eyes were huge and petrified-looking.

"The Lord knows." Mama worked the poultice into Dick's wound.

Polly stared down at Dick's still gray face and she remembered all that she had said to him. *Lord, she prayed silently, please help him get better. I didn't mean to say those bad things to him. He needs to get well. He said I wasn't his enemy even though I said he was a murderin' Rebel. Forgive me for saying*

*that. I'll make up to him if You'll only let him live.
Please, Lord.*

CHAPTER 4

A Proud Vigil



“Polly,” Mama broke into her silence. “Would you fix the beans and hoecakes? I’ll watch him.”

“Yes, Mama.” Polly walked into the kitchen numbly as if in a nightmare. She hated seeing any soldier lying in their house dying from War wounds. It reminded her too much of Papa.

Polly rubbed her eyes furiously and began to batch up the hoecakes after putting the soaked beans to boil. Then, she set the kettle to boil for tea. He had to get well, Dick did.

“Please God, please answer my prayer,” Polly

whispered out the open window where the sun was beginning to sink below the distant hills.



Polly thrashed around under her quilt not sleepy in the least. She kept seeing those large deep eyes staring at her in a scared way. *Is Dick scared he's going to die?* The idea seemed possible to her now that it was dark. Things always seemed scary in the dark.

Polly shivered just thinking about a real *corpse* in their house in the *dark*.

“He can’t die!” Polly told the air furiously in a whisper. “I won’t allow it--not in *my* house! It’ll be so creepy hereafter knowing that a dead man’s been in my house. No! It shan’t be done.”

After a few more wary thoughts about dead men, Polly finally kicked the covers off of her totally and threw her bare feet across the side of the bed. She

Polly's Prisoner

pulled on her shawl over her thick white nightgown and crept softly across the floor. She opened the door quietly, and stepped into the hallway.

Then, she crept down the steps into the back parlor below. To her surprise Mama was sitting in her rocker beside the sofa, her Bible opened before her on her lap. In her surprise Polly overstepped and slid down the last three steps, falling onto the living room floor with a thud.

Mama jerked in surprise and called out softly, "Polly dear, are you alright?"

"Yes," came Polly's mumble, picking herself up from the floor with a scowl. So much for being quiet!

Polly walked straight over to Mama, glancing fearfully at the still form on the sofa.

"Mama," Polly said with a quiver and a gulp. "Mama, I don't want a dead man in our house. I just don't."

"Of course not, dear." Mama said quietly.

"But what if he dies?" Polly pointed to Dick who

was as still as a mouse. “I don’t want Dick to haunt me if he dies in our house,” a gulp, “because I said bad things to him.”

“What, dear?” Mama wanted to know. “What bad things did you say to him?”

“I said he was a murderin’ Rebel.” Polly confessed, crossing her arms with a creased forehead. “I told him he was my enemy and that I wouldn’t help him unless he promised not to steal from us when he got better. I was just being bad though. I hope he gets well,” she added quietly as if an afterthought, “so I can tell him I’m sorry.”

“He’s looking a little better now, Polly.” Mama smiled at her daughter who looked thoroughly worried. “You can go back to sleep now.”

“But I’m not tired, Mama.” Polly protested and her blue eyes pleaded. “Can’t I stay up with you? I can help watch.”

“No, child.” Mama shook her head. “Now you can do me a favor, though.”

Polly's Prisoner

"Yes?" Polly nodded eagerly, brightening.

"Go get some sleep now," Mama smiled through tired eyes, "and then I'll rise you at dawn for your watch. Is that okay?"

"Yes, Mama." Polly smiled and bent over to kiss her mother on the cheek. "Goodnight. Till morning."

Dawn came early to Polly as she found Mama shaking her. "Dress quickly, dear, I'll be waiting downstairs till you come."

Then Mama left the room. Polly sat up, rubbing her eyes. She jumped to the floor, raked up her covers nicely, and dressed as quickly as she could. With a few splashes from her basin and a couple more pats on her towel, her face was clean and her mind was clear. She ran her brush over her thick blond hair and re-braided it. Then, she hopped down the steps, glad to be helping Mama again.

Mama smiled when she saw the rosy-faced, bright-eyed Polly come hopping from the last step.

"Good morning, Mama!" Polly ran over to hug

her and Mama hugged her back, “Good morning, dear. Now, watch him carefully. He seems to be breathing pretty near normal, but at any sign of danger don’t hesitate to call for me. Okay?”

“Okay.” Polly plopped down in the rocker, a little proud to be a *vigil*. “I will. Sleep well. Love you.”

“I love you, too.” Mama smiled down at her only child and silently thanked God for her as she went to her bedroom off the kitchen to get some sleep.

CHAPTER 5

Prisoner Dick



Polly sat in the rocker, feeling important. She was watching a wounded soldier, even though that wounded soldier was just a “murderin’ Rebel” as she called them.

Time seemed to drag on forever to her as she sat at her post as vigil. She glanced at the clock and it only read seven-thirty, just one hour of watching. Light began filtering through the drawn calico curtains...spring light. A new day was awakening.

This is taking forever, watching my prisoner, thought Polly on the verge of springing up from that

hard rocker and going out into the fresh new spring day outdoors to sing with the birds. But no, she had to watch that murderin' Rebel. *Why did I bring him back with me?* Polly pouted, re-crossing her aching legs. *Now I've gotta keep vigil for hours until Mama wakes up.*

But, to Polly's surprise and dread, her prisoner began making a noise on the sofa. *Oh dear!* Polly's eyes opened wide as she gulped with a little uneasiness. *Hope he doesn't groan and scare the daylights out of me. It's a bit scary, even in this brightness. Why did I have to meet up with this thing for?*

But Dick's noise didn't stop. His squirming sounded like he was having a fever-fit.

"Oh boy!" Polly cringed, got up and changed the rag on his forehead for a cool one. "Stay still, please."

But Dick just wouldn't stay still. With his eyes still closed he grabbed at the rag and threw it across

Polly's Prisoner

the floor. "Get that slimy thing off of me!" he mumbled, thrashing around. "Don't want it. Don't need it."

"You do *too* need it!" Polly scolded him sternly even though he seemed out of it. "You're leaving *this* one on. There!"

Polly put another cool rag on his forehead. Dick grabbed at it again but Polly held his hands back. "No, Dick, leave your hands off of my rag that is cooling your fever. You hear me?"

Dick suddenly opened his eyes huge and sat up shakily, his rag falling down his face. "Where am I?"

Polly immediately pushed him back down on his pillows and once again put the rag on his forehead. "Lay still, *please*. You're at my house and you almost died yesterday. But I wouldn't allow it because I didn't want you to haunt me."

"Haunt you?" Dick stared hard with a frown from his pillow with the rag on his forehead. "Like I'd really become a haint, girl! That's crazy talk."

“People surprise you, and *things* too,” Polly said *reassuringly*. “This woman told me once that her great-aunt--”

“Yeah, yeah.” Dick interrupted, closing his eyes. “I’ve heard the same tales from back home.”

“But it was *true*,” Polly said with a frown. “She said that--”

Polly was interrupted by a loud gunfire from a distance away.

“Lord, help us!” Polly looked petrified and sank to the floor to sit down.

Dick noticed Polly’s absolute look of fright so he reached over and patted the top of her blond head. “Don’t worry none. The firing’s a long ways off, maybe miles.”

“You sure?” Polly asked with a little chatter.

“For certain.” Dick smiled and put the scared little face at ease. “I’m pretty good at judging distance. Probably at least two miles away.”

“But that’s still close,” Polly began with a

Polly's Prisoner

quiver. "I don't want to get shot and be killed and be a haint."

Polly's quivering turned into a soft crying.

"I said don't worry, uh, what was your name now?" Dick looked down at the crying girl.

CHAPTER 6

Prestige and Porridge



“Polly.” Polly sniffed loudly and rubbed her eyes.

“Polly, yeah.” Dick looked thoughtful. “Now I remember. Polly the girl who captured me, huh?”

Polly nodded, smiling, and remembered her apology to be given.

“Dick,” Polly began, “I’ve got something to say.”

Dick stared at her, puzzled, and wondered what on earth this girl *would* say.

“I’m really sorry I said those bad things to you yesterday,” Polly’s blue eyes were pleading. “Will you forgive me?”

Polly's Prisoner

"Of course I'll forgive you." Dick grinned and stuck his hand out. "Let's shake on it, shall we?"

Polly shook his hand with a serious look and added a little frightfully, "Last night I thought you were going to die, and it scared me so bad."

"Why?" Dick knitted his brows.

"Because I thought you were going to haunt me for saying bad things to you yesterday," Polly said with a complete no-nonsense attitude.

Dick broke into an open laugh, and Polly then saw how silly she had been. "I know, it was silly of me to think that," she admitted after Dick had quieted.

Dick shook his head wonderingly with a huge smile, "You're the funniest fellow I've ever met!"

"Say," Polly eyed his newly rosy cheeks with her mischievous eyes and with a bursting thought. "Are you well enough to be left unattended for just the tiniest little bit?"

"Sure, why?" Dick suddenly grew sober.

“Because I want to go out into that new spring day and,” Polly said with feeling, “just breathe it in!”

“Okay, you can go.” Dick watched Polly hop to her feet in one short second. “Just bring back the spring in with you for me, please.”

“Okay, I will!” Polly said excitedly, then ran over to open the door to outside.

Dick sank his head back into the pillow and yawned. That Polly was just like a butterfly, always twirling and fluttering her tongue and breaking out into all sorts of colors.

Dick chuckled just thinking about *her*.

Dick yawned again. That talking and laughing sort of exhausted him. He had lost a lot of blood and was still pretty weak. Dick then closed his long black lashes and fell to a restful sort of sleep.

Meanwhile, Polly was outside, *breathing* in that new spring day. By the time she came back in the house Dick was fast asleep and she had an armful of

Polly's Prisoner

poppies, daisies and violets that she had picked from the edge of the clearing.

Quickly placing her flowers into a jar and setting them on the table for a festive air, she went back to check on Dick. She found him sleeping like a log and breathing pretty normal. Polly reached over and felt his forehead which was still a little too hot so she put another cool rag on it. *Still a fever*, Polly sighed and looked down at her captive. *Prisoners sure do take a lot of tending to! Wait till Paul gets back from the War and he'll be so envious that he didn't get himself a real Rebel prisoner, like me!*

Polly then smiled. *Prisoners aren't that bad then when a little prestige comes with it. Who would've thought a little eleven-year-old girl would be a brave captor? Never.*

Now, gotta get breakfast on because Mama will probably wake soon. She never sleeps long in the day even if she is awake all night. Now, Dick, you just sleep like a good boy, please.

Then, Polly went to the kitchen to start breakfast. She made a creamy porridge seasoned with sugar and cinnamon and as she was stirring in the seasoning she found her stomach growling terribly.

Then, she heard her name.

Polly looked where the voice had come from which was at the doorway to the back parlor. She nearly jumped but stopped herself just in time before the porridge pot on the stove came crashing down on her.

CHAPTER 7

Truce



“Hello,” it was Dick standing in the doorway, holding onto the frame for support for he was still rather weak. “Smells good.”

“Dick!” Polly said in surprise, completely round-eyed. “You shouldn’t be up. You’ve still got a fever and no telling how much blood you lost yesterday. You just get back in bed now, okay?”

“Yes, ma’am!” Dick grinned but pointed to the porridge pot. “But I’ve gotta eat first. I’m starving!”

“You’ll eat on the sofa and I’ll fix you a tray,” Polly said decidedly for she didn’t want a boy as

large as Dick to faint on her at the breakfast table. “I’ll take my food in there to eat with you if you’re so much dying for company,” she quickly added, seeing him start to protest.

Dick then grinned, “Okay.”

Then, he made his way slowly back to the sofa. Polly hurriedly pulled down two trays and scooped up their bowls of porridge, placing the bowls on the trays and adding mugs of milk from the cellar. Then, she carefully closed the lid of the pot tight so that the porridge would stay warm for awhile because Mama was still sleeping. Mama would have hers when she woke up.

“Yours first,” Polly said, placing a tray onto Dick’s lap as he sat up against his pillows and had his covers on him.

“Thank you,” Dick smiled. “That’s very sweet of you.”

“Sweet of me for what?” Polly was confused and she turned back around to him with knitted brows.

Polly's Prisoner

“Well,” Dick shrugged with a little stalling. “It was sweet of you for feeding me, for giving me my food first, for just being you.”

Polly chuckled, not quite expecting the praise. “As for giving you your food first,” she shrugged a little comically, “what’s the use of bringing mine in first cause I’ve gotta get yours anyhow. But,” Polly smiled, “I am trying to make up for yesterday as well.”

“Thanks,” Dick looked pleased.

Polly came back to the back parlor with her tray and seated herself on the rocker. Dick still hadn’t touched his food and he was looking up at Polly expectantly.

Polly nodded. “I suppose you’ll ask the blessing for the both of us, will you?”

“I will,” and Dick asked the blessing, adding in an honest voice, “I thank You, Lord, for letting me fall into the hands of such fine folks. Amen.”

Polly felt good with herself as she opened her

eyes and started to eat. *It's good just knowing people think you're fine. Helps your well-being tremendously.* Soon Polly was deep in thought, just thinking about how things had really changed in just one day, in just one moment.

Yesterday she was so full of hate, so full of bitterness for anything that reminded her of her pa's death. She hadn't wanted to help her enemy, that Rebel, but something had told her to. Now she realized he wasn't her enemy and even if he was she should still have helped him no matter what. *I'm glad I did help him,* Polly reflected as she ate silently. *My prisoner is funner than I expected. I'm going to make him play with Lillie with me even if he does laugh at me and call me a baby. I will! He might even enjoy it, too.* She laughed silently just imagining that big boy, Dick, playing with her doll.

Polly then eyed silent Dick who ate steadily and was acting like he was starved. *Poor boy,* she thought with concern. *I wonder how long he's been*

Polly's Prisoner

without real food?

Polly was just halfway through with her food when Dick finally spoke, finished with his food, “Polly, that was really, really good.”

Polly just smiled, pleased, and said and asked together after swallowing her mouthful, “Thank you. Do you want any more? There’s plenty more.”

“If there’s enough I will, if you please?” Dick’s eyes lit up, handing her his empty, scraped-clean bowl. “Haven’t ate like that for days. Always on the run, eating hardtack and plain old water. Does me good just being here a day.”

“You’re gonna be here for a while, too.” Polly told him decidedly. “Because you’re my prisoner, you know, and when you get well you gotta help me around here till my cousin gets back from drumming.”

“Your cousin’s a drummer?” Dick raised his brows in surprise.

“Yeah, he’s a drummer.” Polly nodded soberly.

“Joined up in December just after his birthday. He was fourteen then so they took him as drummer. He can’t fight yet which I’m glad. He’ll be safer.”

“I’m not so sure about that,” Dick eyed Polly carefully, hoping she wouldn’t get too scared. “Bullets don’t just hit soldiers. They hit anywhere, anything, anybody.”

Polly swallowed a little fearfully so Dick hurried to add, “He’ll be alright though if he’s anything like you. You could survive a cannon ball, I believe. You’d just get right up from the ground where the bomb hit you and start going again.”

“Unless I started hearing the gunshots again,” Polly chuckled and then frowned thoughtfully. “Which reminds me, whatever happened to those gunshots we heard a while ago?”

“Dunno,” was Dick’s nonchalant answer. “Nothing really matters too much now to me besides that yummy bowl of porridge you’re aiming to get me. Please?”

Polly's Prisoner

“Oh,” Polly nodded, remembering, and hurried to the kitchen.

CHAPTER 8

Enemy Friend



“My guess is they’re gone now,” Dick said as Polly handed him his new bowl of porridge.

Polly sat down to finish her other half of her food. “I hope so!” she bugged her eyes for drama and started eating again.

“Slow eater, girl.” Dick observed in a voice partly condensed with a mouthful of porridge. “Hurry up, or I’ll beat you *again*. I’ll eat two bowls to your one.”

“I don’t have such a large glass to fill,” Polly said smartly with a grin. “Mine’s just a china cup, if you

please.”

“Then I’m the china pot,” Dick declared with a laugh, “and my goodness fills your little cup!”

“Don’t be ridiculous,” Polly pretended a frown over her unstoppable grin, “and eat.”

“I am, I am!” Dick began stuffing his mouth. “Two bites left.”

“Well, it’s unladylike for *me* to stuff my mouth so of course you win.” Polly ate carefully. “And I *chew* my food, that’s why I’m slow.”

“To me, porridge is just *swallow-able*,” Dick grinned playfully. “No chewing about that stuff. I see a piano,” he changed the subject as his eyes looked around the room. “Do you play?”

Polly just nodded, food still being in her mouth.

“*Will* you play?” Dick raised his brows.

Polly nodded again and stuck her index finger up for him to wait.

“*When* will you play?” Dick’s eyes were laughing.

“After I finish my food which is,” Polly

calculated mentally, “two bites and three drinks away.”

“Okay.” Dick started to get up with his tray but Polly shook her head fiercely, “No, *stay put!* Dick, Mama has to check you first before I allow you to get up. You might still be bad off.”

“I feel fine.” Dick slumped back into his seat.

“But I have to know if you’re really fine,” Polly answered, putting her tray on the rocker seat to get his first so he wouldn’t try to take his tray into the kitchen again.

“Alright,” Dick yawned out, and Polly smiled, “You’re still tired out, number one.”

“And I’m a prisoner, number two.” Dick added airily. “Have to listen to my captor, right?”

“At least I’m a nice captor.” Polly walked towards the kitchen. “It could be worse.”

It could be worse, echoed in Dick’s ears, bringing a smile out of him even though he really wanted to get up. But then earlier he *had* been pretty weak

Polly's Prisoner

standing so he might as well *stay put* like she said.

Polly hurried back to the living room after taking the trays away and sat on the piano bench, turning halfway around with a childish cheesy expression making her look her age, "What shall I play, prisoner?"

"Call me Dick, *please*." Dick narrowed his eyes straight at her cheesy expression. "I may be your prisoner but my *name* is Dick."

"Okay, *Dick*." Polly emphasized. "What shall I play?"

"You should play," Dick thought out slowly, "*The Battle Hymn of Republic*. I like it, even if it does have a Yankee tune."

"Okay," Polly turned back around with a pleased grin on her momentarily shocked face when Dick had said which song she should play.

Polly began the song with a festive air and played quite dramatically, forgetting entirely that Mama was still supposed to be asleep.

CHAPTER 9

Investigating



Dick listened to the hymn, settling himself on the sofa with his left hand under his head, looking up at the ceiling but really not seeing the boards above him. He imaged the words, the scenes of each stanza. *In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea... Let us die to make man free...*

Dick glanced down at the back of Polly's blond head, suddenly filled with the image of her pa who had did just what the song said. Polly's pa had died...he had died to make man free, the slaves.

Polly's Prisoner

Why didn't he think of that before? *That Yankee cause is a good cause*, he silently told himself, realizing the sea of difference between him and Polly was just that they were born in different states but in the same country, that land of the free. That home of the brave.

Dick stared into nowhere, thinking. He wanted to be brave. He wanted to be just American, not Yankee, not Rebel anymore.



As Polly ended the song with a flourish the last verse reminded herself of something. *Lillie!* Polly smiled to herself. *I've got to go get her. And Dick is going to play with me. Yes! He will, because he's my prisoner.*

Polly hopped up, ready to go get the doll.

Dick sat up and yawned. "You almost put me to sleep."

“My ferocious playing putting you to sleep?” Polly looked incredulous. “You must be tired. Are you?”

Dick just nodded with another yawn. Polly frowned inside because Lillie would have to wait, but she saw Dick’s dark circles under his eyes and thought again. *There’ll be plenty of time for Dick to play with me*, was Polly’s thought of comfort. *For he said he wouldn’t run away and I’m going to make him stay here for a long time. I need help until Paul comes home anyhow.*

“Shall I play you to sleep then?” Polly asked, returning to the piano bench.

“Yeah.” Dick pulled his covers up and rolled to his left side. “Please.”

Polly began playing *Fairest Lord Jesus* softly, putting her mind to work on applying her fingers limply, making it sound like a lullaby.

“That’s my ma’s favorite.” Dick mumbled with his eyes closed and his left arm crooked around his

Polly's Prisoner

head on his pillow.

After the three verses of the song finished Polly ended even softer and stopped playing. Then, she craned her head around to see if Dick had fallen asleep or not. Dick had his eyes closed and was breathing evenly, meaning he was sleeping so Polly got up.

And while Dick was asleep she would go outside to investigate those gunshots that they had heard earlier. *You never know*, Polly told herself that only she *would* think of, *I just might find me another prisoner. I'm getting pretty good at this business.*



• The River Valley Adventures •

Book 1: Polly's Prisoner

Book 2: Lillie Andrews

Book 3: Trudy's Threat

Book 4: Church Jail

