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1

A Grown-up Party

Oh, no, Leah, I think your dress is much prettier than mine!" Lucy Driscoll turned her head to one side, touched her dimple with a forefinger, and nodded with a smile. "That green matches your eyes exactly."

Leah Carter flushed with pleasure and examined herself in the mirror. She was wearing a muslin dress printed in a paisley pattern of coral and white with green trim on the collar and sleeves. Her skirt was in three tiers and very full.

She touched her honey-colored hair, which was done up in the newest fashion, and her eyes glowed with excitement. Nevertheless, she quickly said, "Well, I don't think it's as pretty as yours, Lucy."

She was accustomed to being second in any competition regarding clothing, for Lucy Driscoll was the daughter of John and Edith Driscoll, one of the wealthiest planter families in the Richmond area. Lucy *was* a beautiful girl—small, well-shaped, and her blonde hair and blue eyes exactly what they should be. The dress she wore was more ornate than most grown women wore and was made of green silk with pink lace flounces.

Leah had come to pay Lucy a weeklong visit. As the two girls giggled and dressed and arranged each other's hair, Leah thought how strange it was that they had become friends, for they had not always been on such good terms.

Lucy Driscoll was a Rebel to the core, believing in the Southern Confederacy with all her heart. Leah, on the other hand, came from Kentucky, a border state. Her brother was in the Union army, and her father was a sutler, serving the Union troops. The two girls had not been at all friendly at first, but Lucy had changed greatly, Leah thought, smiling.

"It's so nice that you invited me to stay with you, Lucy." Leah smiled. "Do you think we dare wear some of that rice powder you found?"

Lucy giggled. "I don't see why not. After all, we're practically grown up. I mean, after all, we're fourteen years old, going on fifteen."

The two girls delved into the cosmetics that had belonged to Lucy's sister, and finally Lucy exclaimed, "We'd better go down! I think I hear the music already."

"I wouldn't want to be late," Leah said.

Lucy's eyes gleamed. "I would!" she exclaimed. "If you go to a party early, nobody notices you—but when you go in late like this, everybody stops to stare." She laughed and took Leah by the arm. "I'm just joking, but I'm so excited—our first grown-up ball! And some of the young officers will ask us to dance."

"I'm more excited about meeting Belle Boyd than any officers," Leah said. "I mean, she's the most famous Confederate spy in the whole South. She's a real celebrity."

"Oh, it'll be fun meeting her all right."

Lucy was rather spoiled with meeting celebrities. She had met Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, and Jeb Stuart. They had all been at her parents' home at one time or another.

"I'm more excited about this dance card," she said. Lucy held up her card, and her eyes sparkled. "How many dances are you going to give Cecil?"

Leah flushed slightly. "Oh, I don't know," she muttered. She was much shyer than Lucy, having grown up on a farm. She'd had no experience in ballroom dancing at all until she came to take care of her Uncle Silas here in Virginia. Trying now to look casual about the whole thing, she said, "He probably won't even ask me—not with you around in that dress."

"Oh, yes, he will. He's crazy about you, Leah." Lucy nodded. She was a Southern belle to the bone, having grown up with beaux and parties and balls. Her older sister had been the most beautiful eligible belle in Richmond, so Lucy was fully aware of all the ways of flirting with young men.

They went down the beautiful curving staircase where they encountered a couple who had just entered.

"I don't believe you've met Mr. and Mrs. Pollard, have you, Leah?" Lucy said. "Mr. Pollard is the editor of the *Richmond Examiner*." She reached over and patted the big man's hand. "He's not only the best-looking editor in the South but the most important."

John Pollard was a tall, portly man with longish gray hair and brown, friendly eyes. "Now, don't you start flirting with me," he teased Lucy. "My wife will be jealous."

Mrs. Pollard was a small woman with carefully dressed reddish hair and very light blue eyes. She smiled. "If he were a few years younger, I'd take him away right now." She turned to Leah and said, "I've

heard so much about you from your Uncle Silas. How is your family in Kentucky?"

"Oh, they're fine. I miss them a great deal, of course."

"I'm sure you do. Well—"

Mrs. Pollard was interrupted when a tall young man with the blackest possible hair, black as a crow's wing, joined them. He had well-set black eyes and was tanned in a very attractive fashion so that his teeth shone when he smiled.

"Why, hello, Jeff!" Lucy said quickly. "Have you met Mr. and Mrs. Pollard?"

The introductions were made, and Mr. Pollard examined Jeff's uniform. It was ash gray with brass buttons and looked very good on him. "What's your unit, soldier?"

"I'm in the Stonewall Brigade," Jeff Majors said proudly.

"You look so young!" Mrs. Pollard said.

"I'm almost sixteen," Jeff said quickly. "I'm a drummer boy right now, but it won't be long before I'll be in the regular army."

He turned to the two girls. "I've come to get my name on your programs before those other fellows get all the dances." He grinned. "Put me down for half of them."

Lucy laughed. "Why, you bold thing! I won't do any such thing as that—but you can have two."

Jeff winked at her, then turned to Leah. The two had grown up together, and their families were closely intertwined. As a matter of fact, Leah's family was keeping Jeff's baby sister, Esther. Since Jeff's mother had died and there had been no one else to care for the baby, the Carter family had generously volunteered.

“Well, I’ll have all of yours then, Leah.”

“No, you won’t.”

Another young man, dressed in a beautifully tailored brown suit, shoved his way in front of Jeff. “I’m having the dances with Leah. You may be in the army, but you can’t hog all the good-looking girls.”

Cecil Taylor was the same age as Jeff. He was rather thin with chestnut hair and bright blue eyes. His parents were almost as wealthy as Lucy’s, and of course the two sets of parents had often whispered about how nice it would be if Cecil and Lucy fell in love and got married. Then, together they would have the biggest plantation in the South.

Mr. and Mrs. Pollard drifted away, and the two boys began to argue over dances. But they were soon swamped by soldiers. The two girls were young, but girls in the South matured early, and the young lieutenants themselves were mostly not over seventeen or eighteen.

Lucy had her arm seized by Jeff, who led her off to the dance floor. She looked back over her shoulder and smiled at Cecil, whereupon Jeff said sharply, “You watch out for that Cecil. He’s not always a gentleman such as a young man should be.”

“Don’t you worry,” Cecil retorted. “Jeff’s the one to look out for.” Turning to Leah, he said, “There’s the music. I’ve got me the prettiest girl in Richmond, and I propose to have her all to myself as much as possible.”

It was a beautiful experience for Leah. As she whirled around the floor, her hoop skirt swinging, she remembered that the first time she had come to this place it had not been so. She had come wearing

rather plain clothes, and Lucy had cruelly interrogated her about her Northern sympathies.

Now, however, she was having a wonderful time. The oak floor was polished, and lights glistened from the chandeliers. At the sides of the room, silver trays and crystal glasses were lined up on a snow-white tablecloth along with all sorts of refreshment.

“You’d never know a war was going on, would you?” Cecil murmured.

Leah thought of the wounded soldiers she had visited in the hospital at Chimborazo. They had been so pathetic that sometimes she had to leave so that they could not see the tears that came to her eyes.

Looking around the ballroom, she thought about how, even on the streets of Richmond, clothes were wearing thin, groceries were nonexistent in some cases, and the Confederacy was slowly being squeezed to death by the blockade that the Union had thrown along the coastline. Only a few swift-sailing blockade runners dared brave the Yankee gunboats to carry cotton for sale in England, returning with the precious commodities that kept the South alive.

“No, you wouldn’t know there’s a war. This is very nice.” She looked over to where Jeff was dancing with Lucy. He was very tall, and Lucy was so small that she had to look up at him. “I wish I were tiny like Lucy,” Leah said suddenly. “I feel like a big old cow!”

Cecil stared at her in surprise, “What makes you think such a thing?”

“Oh, I don’t know. I just feel that way.”

“Well,” Cecil said, “stop thinking that way.” He glanced over and said, “They do make a nice-looking couple, don’t they? Wouldn’t be surprised but what Jeff didn’t fall in love with her. Most fellows do. I did!”

“Oh, you two were just childhood playmates.”

“Well, that’s true enough, and I guess people don’t often fall in love with people they grew up next door to.”

“Sometimes they do.”

Leah’s answer was so short that Cecil stared at her. Then he seemed to suddenly remember that Leah and Jeff had grown up together just as he and Lucy had. “You know, I think you’re stuck on Jeff.”

Leah blushed and bit her lip. “Don’t be silly,” she said.

Just at that moment the band reached the end of the piece, and Leah was claimed by a short, fat young lieutenant with a moon face and a thick Southern accent. He could not dance very well, but he was amusing. Leah found herself laughing at some of his outlandish remarks.

The dance had been going on for thirty minutes when a woman came into the room in the company of Mr. and Mrs. Pollard. Lucy and Leah were at the table with Cecil and Jeff, sampling the punch.

“Look! There’s Belle Boyd,” Lucy said. “Come on, let’s go meet her.” They crossed the room, and when they reached the threesome, Lucy smiled and said, “Miss Boyd, I’ve just *got* to meet you. My name is Lucy Driscoll.” She introduced her friends quickly and added, “Oh, Miss Belle, we’ve heard so much about you!”

Belle Boyd, a young woman of about twenty, was not really beautiful. Her nose was a little too

prominent, and she had a very determined chin. But she had a trim figure, and her dark hair was worn in curls. Her best feature was her fine, dark blue eyes, which she now put on the young people in front of her. "I'm happy to meet all of you," she said.

"Oh, tell us about some of your adventures saving the Stonewall Brigade," Lucy said quickly.

She turned to Jeff. "Jeff is in the Stonewall Brigade, and so are his father and his brother."

"Now here!" Mr. Pollard exclaimed. "We don't have time for Miss Boyd to tell stories."

He was right, for the young officers in their ash gray uniforms began crowding around, all clamoring for a dance with Miss Belle Boyd. She was sometimes called the Siren of the Shenandoah, sometimes the Rebel Spy. Already she had been arrested four times by Union authorities but each time had managed to obtain her freedom. She again turned her wonderful eyes on Leah, Lucy, and Jeff, saying quickly, "I'll be staying for a visit with your parents, Lucy. We'll have plenty of time to talk."

As Belle Boyd whirled off in the arms of a tall captain, Lucy said, "Isn't that exciting! She's so pretty!"

"She's not as pretty as you," Jeff observed. "Come on, this is my dance, Lucy." They moved away, Lucy's dress sweeping in wide circles to the waltz tune that the band played.

"Well, that's exciting—to get to meet Belle Boyd and actually talk to her. She's really something!" Jeff said.

"Yes, she is. I read stories about her in some of the magazines, but I never thought I'd get to meet her."

Leah's head was swimming from all the dances she'd had. She could not remember the names of all the young men she'd met.

Finally Cecil whispered, "Let's go get some more refreshments."

He got some cake and punch, handed a plate and cup to Leah, and said, "Come on, let's get out of this noise. I haven't had a chance to talk to you for all these blasted soldiers!"

"Don't call them that!" Leah protested.

She followed him out into a small garden area paved with flagstone. When he closed the French doors, the music became soft and muted. "Hey, this is nice, isn't it? Here, let's sit on this bench!"

Leah sat down and took a bite of cake. "This is good," she said. She looked around and noted the huge trees surrounding the Driscoll mansion. "I love magnolias," she said. "Their blossoms smell sweeter than anything."

Cecil took a swallow of punch and turned to her. "No better than you. They don't smell any better than you. You've been using perfume."

Leah flushed, for she had used some of the scent that Lucy had appropriated from her sister. "That's not nice to talk about what a girl smells like."

Cecil grinned. He was a happy-go-lucky boy. "Well, it is if they smell good," he argued.

Leah liked Cecil a great deal. He was an alert young man, full of fun and oftentimes practical jokes, and she enjoyed his teasing. He began talking about how in another two years he would be able to join the army.

Leah said quickly, "Oh, I hope the war's over by that time."

“Well, if the Yankees give up, it will be,” Cecil said confidently.

“I don’t know—the South is losing so many men.”

“So are the blue bellies.”

“I know, but they have so many more. Their armies just keep filling up.”

“Sometimes numbers don’t count so much.”

“What does that mean?”

“Well, in the story about Gideon in the Bible, the Israelites only had about three hundred men—and they defeated their enemies.”

“That’s not the same thing!”

“Why not?”

“Because that happened a long time ago!”

“Well then, look at the American Revolution. The British had more soldiers than the colonists—but they didn’t win.” Cecil suddenly asked, “Which side are you really for, Leah? I’ve never really understood that. I mean, your brother’s in the Union army, and Jeff’s in the Confederate army. You’ve got an uncle here that’s for the South. But your family—I guess they have to be for the North. What about you?”

It was a question that Leah had never been able to answer. She hated the idea of slavery with all of her heart. She also hated the war. But it had been obvious for some time that the North and the South would never be reconciled by peaceful means.

“I don’t know,” she finally said and dropped her head. “I just wish it were over.”

Cecil was a sensitive young man. He obviously saw that he had disturbed her with his talk of the war and was sorry for it. Then his eyes gleamed with humor, and he said, “Leah!” He put down his

cup. "I made my mother a promise one time. Do you think you ought to keep your promises? Especially to your mother?"

"Why, of course I do." Leah grew curious. "What did you promise her?"

"I promised her I would never kiss a girl until I was seventeen."

"Well, I think that's good." Leah nodded firmly.

Cecil reached over and took her arms. He was laughing as he said, "But I've decided to make an exception in your case." Then, before she could move, he kissed her on the lips.

Just as he did, the door opened behind them.

Leah pulled away from Cecil and leaped to her feet.

There stood Jeff with Lucy, staring at them. Lucy hid a smile behind her hand, but Jeff's dark eyes were angry. He said, "I think it's about time for you two to come inside."

"Oh, don't be such an old stick, Jeff." Lucy said.

But Jeff turned and walked away, and she followed him.

"I sure made old Jeff mad that time, didn't I?" Cecil whistled softly. He stared at Leah, saying, "I'm sorry. I was just teasing."

"Oh, he'll be all right. Jeff's just got kind of a hot temper."

Later on, Leah found it was not all right. She had one more dance with Jeff, and he did not say a word to her. He kept his head high and his eyes fixed over her head at the other dancers.

"Don't be mad, Jeff. Cecil was just teasing."

"None of my business what you do!" he said shortly. "If you want to go around kissing everybody that comes along—well, that's fine with me! 'Course,

I expect your family would be pretty disappointed in you if they found out.”

Instantly Leah grew angry. “I suppose you’re going to run and write a letter telling them—or perhaps tell Uncle Silas!”

“Well, somebody needs to tell them.”

“You’re just an old tattletale! Besides, I bet you kissed Lucy, didn’t you?”

Jeff’s face suddenly flushed. “That’s none of your business,” he said. “I’m older than you are.”

“One year older! That makes you grown up, does it?”

“It means I’m older than you are!”

“That doesn’t mean anything!”

Jeff grew more angry. “You have a stubborn streak in you. Everybody knows that.”

“I have a stubborn streak?” Leah glared at him, her eyes flashing. “You’re the one who’s stubborn—and unreasonable too!”

“You think it’s reasonable to kiss a boy out in the garden?”

Actually Leah was not proud of her scene with Cecil, but as many people do when they’re feeling guilty, she tried to cover up her feelings by attacking others. “You’re a fine one to talk! You made a fool of yourself over Lucy the first time you ever saw her.”

“I never kissed her in the garden!”

“You would if you got the chance!”

“I would not!”

The argument flared up further, and finally Jeff turned and walked off.

That night, in the room the two girls shared, Lucy said cautiously, “Don’t worry about Jeff. He’ll be all right.”

“I don’t care if he is or not!” Leah said. She turned over and said no more. She was so angry and upset that tears came to her eyes, but she kept very still, not allowing Lucy to dream that she was crying.

For a long time she lay there, going over the terrible argument with Jeff, and finally admitted to herself that she’d been in the wrong—at least partially.

But we’ll make it—we always do.

Yet somehow she felt worse than she had over the arguments she’d had with Jeff in the past. Finally she drifted off to sleep—and had bad dreams all night.

2

Belle Gives Some Advice

The day after the party, Leah remained alone and was very quiet for most of the day.

Lucy knew, of course, that she was disturbed about the scene with Jeff and tried to encourage her. She must have quickly realized, however, that Leah did not want to talk about the matter.

"I'm going for a ride," Lucy said. "Do you want to go with me?"

"No, I think I'll just stay and read."

"It might do you good, Leah."

"I don't think so. Maybe later."

After Lucy left, Leah went to the extensive family library, a huge room filled with books and magazines and papers of all kinds. She found a novel by James Fenimore Cooper and sat down in a horsehide chair beside a window. Soon she was immersed in the story and had managed to forget the dreadful scene with Jeff.

The door suddenly opened, and Belle Boyd walked in. "Oh!" she said. "I didn't know anyone was in here."

"It's just me—Leah." Getting up, she said, "I expect you'll be wanting to look for something to read."

Belle Boyd said, "Oh, I can do that anytime. Sit down and tell me about yourself."

"About myself? Why, there's nothing much to tell."

"I'll bet there is." Belle settled herself gracefully on the couch and smiled encouragingly. "Now, tell me about your home."

Leah sat down again and quickly sketched her background.

Belle seemed to find her story a little sad. She frowned and shook her head. "There are so many families divided by the war—but as soon as we win, that'll be over, and things'll be like they were."

Leah doubted it would be quite that simple, but she said, "Please, Miss Belle, tell me about some of your adventures. You've had so many of them!"

Belle Boyd acted as though she was accustomed to this. She laughed and said, "Are you planning on becoming a spy for the Confederacy, Leah?" It was clear that she loved to talk about her exploits and at once told about an exciting adventure.

"I'm not sure you'd like to hear *all* my adventures, Leah. I suppose you've heard about the time I had to shoot a Yankee soldier?" Her eyes gleamed.

"Why . . . no . . . I haven't."

"Well, a Federal search party began pillaging our home. We all took it as well as possible, but one of the soldiers began addressing me in a most offensive manner. He became so abusive I could stand it no longer!" Belle's eyes flashed with anger at the memory. "Finally my blood was boiling. I just drew my pistol and shot him!"

"Did he die?"

"Yes, he did. But he brought it on himself."

Leah was rather taken aback but asked for another story.

"Once Stonewall and his brigade were outside of Front Royal, but they had no idea of the strength of the Yankee force. I mounted my horse and rode

until I encountered Major Henry Douglas, who was on a scouting mission. I was almost falling off my horse with weariness and had to press my hand against my heart, but I managed to say, 'Go back and tell General Jackson that the Yankee force is very small—one regiment of Maryland infantry, several pieces of artillery, and several companies of cavalry. Tell him I know, for I went through the Union camp and got it out of an officer. Tell him to charge right down, and he will catch them all. I must hurry back. Good-bye—my love to all the dear boys!' I remember I kissed my hand to Major Douglas as I rode away."

"And what happened, Miss Belle?"

"Why, General Jackson took Front Royal that afternoon. They routed the Yankees and took \$300,000 in commissary stores!"

"And what happened then?"

"I was arrested as a spy and sent to the Old Capitol Prison in Washington."

Leah had sat enthralled while listening to Belle, who told her adventures well. She sighed and said, "You have a great deal of courage, Miss Belle. Not many women would have been able to do what you've done."

Belle glanced at her. She rather quietly changed the subject. "You look a little depressed, Leah. Is anything wrong?"

"Oh, no, it's nothing."

"Come on, now! Tell me about it. A pretty young girl like you—I expect I know what the problem is."

"Oh, it's nothing, really."

"I bet you've had a disagreement with some young man. Is that the way of it?"

Trapped, Leah dropped her eyes and began to

pick at the pattern on her dress. She was wearing a simple tan cotton dress with a locket around her neck. "Oh, you wouldn't be interested."

When Belle saw Leah fingering the locket, she asked innocently, "Is there a picture inside that pretty locket?"

Leah felt herself flush, and Belle Boyd smiled even more broadly.

"Let me see it, will you?"

Leah reluctantly opened the locket and held it out. It contained the picture of Jeff Majors he had given her for a birthday present. That gold locket was her prized possession, but she felt uncomfortable showing the picture to Belle Boyd.

"Why, this is the young man that was at the party last night. What's his name?"

"Jeff Majors."

"Did you two quarrel?"

"Well . . . yes, we did," Leah admitted reluctantly.

"Tell me about it."

Suddenly Leah began to pour out her story. She had not been able to talk to Lucy because she secretly felt that Lucy admired Jeff.

But Belle Boyd seemed truly sympathetic. Her large eyes fixed firmly on Leah's face, and the girl told the whole story.

To Leah's horror she found that her own eyes were beginning to fill up with tears as she ended. "I—I don't know what's the matter with me. I'm getting to be a regular crybaby." She searched in her pocket, came up with a handkerchief, and dabbed at her eyes. "I never used to cry when I was little. Now look at me—blubbering like anything!"

Belle leaned over and patted Leah's arm. "How old are you, Leah?"

"Fourteen. Going on fifteen," she amended quickly.

"Well, it's not too strange that you would be easily disturbed."

"But I never got disturbed when I was little. My parents always would say, 'Everybody else may get excited but not Leah—she's steady as a rock.'"

"You were a little girl then, but something's happening to you now, and you have to understand it."

"What is it? What do you mean?" Leah asked, mystified.

"Well, you're moving out of girlhood," Belle said quietly, "and sometimes it's hard to stop being a little girl. Being little is safe."

Leah was fascinated. "What do you mean by that, Miss Belle?"

"I mean, when you're a little girl and you have problems, you can take them to your parents to resolve. And your problems are usually pretty simple: will I get a new dress, will I get a new doll, can I go on the picnic? Things like that. But at your age, that's changing."

Leah knew Miss Boyd was young enough to remember clearly when she was Leah's age, and now she told about how it had been. "When I was just your age, it was very hard for me. For one thing, I was changing physically—and that was *very* confusing."

Leah understood.

"But what happens inside is even harder to understand." She sighed and shrugged her trim shoulders. "It's hard to stop being a little girl, Leah, but you have to become a woman. There's no way around that."

Leah twisted her handkerchief nervously. She

knew what Belle Boyd was trying to tell her. She had already thought of such things, and her mother had talked with her. But somehow Belle was able to make it all come clear.

The two talked for a long time. When they finally stood up, Belle put her arms around the girl, hugged her, and kissed her cheek. "You're so pretty, Leah. You're a beautiful young woman. It may be hard right now, but things will come out all right. Jeff's just a little jealous." She laughed and said, "I can tell you a few things about how to make men jealous—and how to get them over it."

"I don't think I want to know that—at least not how to make them jealous," Leah said quickly, "but I would like to know how not to get into these things."

"You probably will get into some more as you grow up. That's part of being a woman."

As Belle turned to go, Leah asked, "How long will you be here, Miss Belle?"

At once Belle Boyd looked a little uncomfortable. "Well, I'm not sure," she said evasively. "I do have some things to do. But my plans aren't complete yet."

Belle left the room, and Leah thought, *I wonder why she was so secretive?* And then she thought instantly, *I bet she's going on some kind of secret mission!*

For the next two days, Leah stayed close to Belle. Several times she thought that she sensed an air of mystery around the Rebel Spy. Belle would start to say something, then break off abruptly and change the subject.

At dusk one afternoon, Leah went out into the rose garden. She seated herself on a low bench and

was watching the sun go down. The garden was thickly planted with rosebushes that had grown very high, and there were paths between them. And then she heard Mr. Pollard's voice.

"We must be very careful, my dear. You know the dangers."

"Of course, Mr. Pollard." It was Belle Boyd speaking, and instantly Leah knew that they were discussing some sort of assignment.

The voices came closer.

Then Mr. Pollard said, "Have you told anyone about the journey?"

"No one knows except President Davis."

"It's a very dangerous thing, but I think it will be a worthy mission for you."

"I'll give you the particulars of the—" Suddenly Belle broke off, for they had turned the corner and saw Leah sitting on the bench. "Leah!" she exclaimed, "I didn't know you were out here!"

"I just . . . came out to watch the sunset." Leah stood to her feet.

Mr. Pollard was disturbed. "Did you hear what we were talking about, Leah?"

She saw that Belle was watching her carefully, though she said nothing.

Leah was a very truthful girl. "Yes, I did, Mr. Pollard—about Miss Belle going on a journey."

Belle and Mr. Pollard exchanged glances.

Mr. Pollard said severely, "I wish you hadn't heard us, Leah."

"I wasn't eavesdropping—really I wasn't."

Belle came over to her. She examined Leah's face. She was unsmiling this time. "It will be very dangerous for me if anyone knew I was going on

this trip. If I were caught, I'd be sent back to prison—perhaps for life.”

“Oh, I wouldn't like that at all—it would be terrible for you,” Leah said.

“I've got to get to England—on a very important mission.”

“Yes,” Mr. Pollard nodded. “It would be very bad for the Confederacy if she were captured.”

“You're going to England?”

“Oh, you didn't overhear all of the plan? Well, you might as well know,” Belle said. “I'm going to England to try to raise support for the Confederacy. If the Yankees knew I was on that blockade runner, they'd throw every ship they had into the area to try to capture it.”

Leah said quickly, “I won't say a word—not to anyone in the whole world. I promise, Miss Belle.”

Belle looked at the girl and seemed to find what she was looking for. “I'm sure you won't,” she said. She turned to Mr. Pollard, saying confidently, “It'll be all right. Leah and I are good friends. She won't say anything. We can trust Leah.”

Mr. Pollard seemed relieved. “That's good. It will only be for a day or two, Leah.” He patted her on the shoulder and said, “I'm sorry you had to get involved in this, but just don't say anything to anyone and it'll be all right.”

After the two left, Leah walked slowly along the pathways. The scent of the roses filled the air, and the night air was still. Far off she heard someone singing a song in a plaintive voice. She thought, *I'm glad I don't have to be a spy like Belle Boyd. It'd be exciting, but I wouldn't like it!*