

# A Farm Girl

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## CHAPTER ONE The Orphanage

“Now, you will sit there until you have well thought over your wrong doings and are prepared to ask forgiveness.” The sound of shoes clicking across the hard wooden floor signaled to Del that Miss Chapley was leaving the room. The door slammed and Del knew she was alone. She could not *exactly* see that she was alone for she was sitting on a small wooden bench, staring at the brown-gray wall in front of her. It was not Del’s first time being sent to the corner in the hot, stuffy room christened “The thinking place”. It was probably the fourth or fifth time this month, actually. The girl sighed and shifted uncomfortably on the bench. She did not like to spend time thinking over what she had “done wrong”. If she did that, she would be obeying Miss Chapley and that was something she tried often not to do. All the same when you are tired, alone, and bored of staring at the wall you’re bound to start thinking of what you have done to put you in such a place. Del’s mind wandered to her *great offence* that day: dumping her breakfast porridge into Hazel Jemima’s lap. It was not an accident either. Hazel deserved every bit of sticky porridge that ran down her legs and into her socks. Hazel had insulted Del’s mother. Del’s mother had been an Indian and Del was sure she had been a beautiful princess who, despite her looks, had been able to shoot an arrow and hit her target while standing yards away. Hazel had called her mother a dirty savage who was no doubt better off not living.

Del, felt her anger flare inside her as she pictured Hazel’s smug pudgy face. And now here *she* was, in the corner, by no fault of her own besides defending her mother’s respect. This was how it was every day it seemed. Here in the Philadelphia Orphanage for Unfortunate Girls and Boys. “I was more fortunate out in the streets than here” Del muttered to herself observing a stringy spider web that hung off the wall near her foot. Everyday she got in some kind of fight and every day she wished more and more that she could get out of this terrible stone building that was ice cold in the winter and, like now, burning hot in the summer. This year of 1793 seemed to have been the hottest summer Del had ever experienced and it gave her even less reason to stay cooped up inside. She had, in fact, tired to get away, more than once. But even though on the streets she could steal a loaf of bread and be off with it quicker than a wink, in the orphanage it was nearly impossible to escape. The main doorway was constantly watched by the old, unfeeling, Mrs. Breakstone who sat on her rocking chair, all day it seemed, knitting a never-ending scarf. It was easy to slip past the old woman and out the door, but getting out over the pointed steel fence was another thing. Del had never made it past that dreadful fence without getting caught halfway over. But Del was still proud. That fence was hard to climb, but she was sturdy and muscular, even with the small amount of food that left her ribs sticking out of her skin. The door behind Del suddenly clicked open. The girl did not turn, knowing that she was not allowed to turn her head from the wall until Miss. Chapley

said she could. "*Click, Click.*" Miss Chapley's heels snapped against the floor as she came closer to Del.

"Have you had enough time to think about what you have done?"

"Yes, Ma'am." Del nodded, inwardly holding her nose, for the biting smell of perfume that Mrs. Chapley had rubbed on her wrists and neck was nearly suffocating.

"And are you ready to apologize to Miss Hazel Jemima?"

Del only paused for a fraction of a second before answering calmly, "No, Ma'am."

Del heard Miss. Chapley's breath come out in an exasperated "whoosh".

"Delaney McArthur, I will not stand for any resistance for you. Miss Hazel deserves an apology from you and she *will* get it."

"She doesn't deserve any apology from me. I was only defending my mother."

"This is not the time..." suddenly from somewhere up stairs came a pitiful cry of a child. This sound was heard often in the orphanage and Miss Chapley ignored it. "This is not the time..." she began again when the sound of feet flying down the stairs stopped her mid-sentence again. Del, turned around, even though she had not been allowed to yet, to see what all the commotion was. The noisemaker appeared to be Miss Clark, who, as one of the younger teachers, taught reading to the children during school time.

Her cheeks were flushed and it seemed she had run all the way down the stairs.

"Matilda!" She called out hurriedly. It took Del a minute to realize she was addressing Miss Chapley, who was almost never called by her first name. "Bobby James is burning with fever...he cries and cries for water but when I try to give it to him he won't drink."

"Dose him with some medicine then!" Ordered Miss Chapley crisply. "He's been sick for a few days now; all he needs is some rest."

"No, he won't take it.... Matilda, he is turning the oddest color.... almost yellow..."

Miss Chapley suddenly looked stricken with fear. "Where is he?"

"In his bed...where...where... he always sleeps." Mrs. Clark looked scared.

"Come!" Miss Chapley ordered. They were half way out the door before Miss Chapley remembered Del. "You are dismissed. Go to your room and stay there. " Del blinked as she watched the two women charge up the stairs. She had never seen Miss Chapley react in such a way to a simple fever. Del stood, and realizing that she had narrowly missed getting banished to the "Thinking Room" for another hour, walked calmly out the door with her chin high. She walked up the same stairs as Miss. Chapley and Miss Clark had except when she reached the top she turned to the left towards the girl's compartments. The left hallway led to the boy's rooms. As Del passed the door that Hazel was no doubt in chatting and gossiping with her roommates, she had to work hard to stop herself from flinging open the door and saying something improper. Del had quite a monstrous temper, no doubt inherited by her father who had been an Irish explorer. Del imagined he had fought many battles and traveled near and far until he had met her Mother, whose name in English meant Many Seasons. Then they had fallen in love and gotten married. At least, that was what Del *thought* had happened. She was only four years old and staying at a school for young girls when her father and mother had died in a shipwreck. Del closed her eyes and bit her lip. She hated thinking about the past. Doing her best to banish all thoughts of this from her mind she came to her own door and knocked on it slowly and deliberately.

"Who is it?" Called out Jane's voice.

“Del,” came the answer plainly and calmly. The door swung open in a rush and Jane, Florence, and Polly all stood there in amazement.

“She’s done it again!” Cried Florence pretending the faint on the floor. “The amazing escapable Del has managed to get away from the evil clutches of Chapley!”

“Come in, quick!” Said Jane pulling Del in by one arm and closing the door behind her. “Is there anyone after you this time?”

“Do you need to go under the bed again?” Asked Polly looking nervous and excited all at once.

“No, and no,” Answered Del calmly walking over to her bed and flopping down on it. “Golly, it’s awful hot in here! Open the window at least, Flo!”

Polly bounced about beside Del’s bed. “Don’t keep us in suspense! Tell us what happened! Everyone heard that you poured your porridge all over Hazel...is it true? I didn’t see it happen!”

“Nobody ask her anything,” Demanded Florence returning from the window. “Her head is too big as it is, so there’s no need to make her feel like she’s a hero.” Del, knew Flo was fooling but never the less she felt her chest give an involuntary swell at the thought she had somehow managed to elude trouble again.

“Well,” Del sat up slowly ready to drag out the whole story, adding things here and there to make it more interesting when there was a knock at the door. Not just any knock but a knock that sounded like this: *tap-ta-tap-tap-ta*. Del sprung up and was at the door in an instant. She whispered through the lock “you alone?”

“Yes” came the answer. Del hurriedly opened the door to come face to face with Isaac.

Jane was up beside Del in an instant. “You know it’s against the rules to come into the girl’s quarters, Isaac.” Del ignored Jane and let Isaac into the room.

“I’m sorry,” he apologized to Jane, “but it’s important this time.”

Jane tossed her blonde hair. “I certainly hope so.”

Isaac turned to Del. “Bobby James just died.” Polly put her hand over her mouth in shock.

Del swallowed hard. “Just now?”

“Just now.” Isaac sniffed bravely. “They wouldn’t even let me in to see him before he passed.” Polly began to cry. Being the youngest in their room, at age eleven, she often cried.

“Miss Clark said that...he was turning yellow.” Del brushed sweat for her forehead. The hot stuffy room was beginning to close in on her. “Then Miss Chapley looked all worried and ran off.”

“Yellow?” Isaac looked worried. “I’ve never heard her say that.”

Florence’s mouth gaped open. “Maybe it was the yellow fever caught ‘em.” Everyone was silent. Of course this thought had occurred to them all before but saying it aloud was a whole different matter.

“Nah,” Jane answered in a positive manner. “Where could he catch it? We’ve been in this prison for at least a week. Not since the picnic in fact. Mrs. Clark probably just *thought* he looked yellow.”

Polly began to whimper again and Isaac hurriedly said in his old teasing way, “You’re probably right, ol’ Janie my dear, just Miss Clark over-reacting. After all, most every summer there are some yellow fever outbreaks, but they always go away in a couple of weeks.”

“My name isn’t Janie, and I’m certainly not “your dear,”” snapped Jane, though her expression showed that she didn’t mind the name calling as much as she was implying. “Now you get yourself outta here ‘fore Miss Chapley catches you here and gives us all some “time to think about what we’ve done.”

“Right.” Said Isaac. “Bye, all!” And he was out the door.

Polly sat down on her bed, her hands over her eyes with her loose brown curls covering her face. Del quickly moved over and wrapped her arm around the disconsolate girl. “Bobby James was only ten years old!” Polly sobbed. “Oh, Del,” she said looking up into the tan face of her friend, “what if I die?” Flo snorted, only because she was worried herself and had no other way of showing how she felt then impatience and annoyance.

“No, Polly. You won’t die. None of us will,” Del said determinedly. “It was probably just a little fever, don’t worry yourself about it.” But somehow, deep down, Del felt that is wasn’t just an ordinary fever.

## CHAPTER TWO

# Yellow Fever

Del did not wake from the tolling bell that called all the girls and boys to “get dressed, wash up, and come downstairs” as usual. She woke from the heat alone. As Del sat up in her bed she could feel the sweat on her forehead and her nightgown sticking to her sweaty back. Flo and Polly were awake but Jane lay in her bed, her breath rasping out horribly. “What is the matter with Jane?” Del asked getting up and then being forced to sit down again by the spinning of her head. Then heat seemed to press in on all sides and she felt lightheaded and thirsty.

Flo, who was up beside Jane, looked somewhat pale and un-well herself. “I don’t know,” She answered. “Polly’s got the same thing.” Del looked over in horror at Polly who was wrapped in her blanket sitting upright on her bed and coughing now and then. Sweat lay in beads on her forehead. Del forced herself to get up from her bed and ignoring the sudden headache that pounded in her head she walked over to Polly and looked into her pale face. *Polly and Jane couldn’t be sick. How could they be sick?*

There was a rapid knock at the door and a voice called out, “Girls are you awake?” It was Miss Clark.

“Yes,” Del replied. “Polly and Jane are sick.”

Miss Clark said nothing to this only; “I need all of you out here in the hallway immediately.” With Del helping Polly and Jane leaning on Flo the four girls stumbled unsteadily out into the hallway where more boys and girls waited in a growing crowd.

Miss Chapley’s voice rang out from somewhere in the swarm of children. “Get in two lines!” She shouted. “Boys on the right, girls on the left.” Del found herself being sucked into the line of girls forming single file down the stairs, getting separated from Polly, Jane, and Flo. Miss Chapley along with Miss Clark and Mrs. Landburry, the Math and Science teacher, stood between the lines making sure everyone was in order. After a bit of searching Del spotted Jane, Flo, and Polly a little ways up the line. She waved and Florence waved back.

“Children!” Miss Chapley’s voice rose over the chattering boys and girls. “Quiet children!” Once there was silence Miss Chapley stood below the stairs facing each line. “It

seems there has been a bit of an outbreak of a fever here.” Miss. Chapley looked tired and unwell. “There is no reason to worry, for we have called in Dr. Graford and he is going to check you all to see if you are well or not.”

“What if we’re not?” Called out a brave boy with freckles and red hair. Miss Chapley ignored him though there was little doubt in Del’s mind that she had heard him.

“You will take alternate turns,” Miss Chapley began again, “one boy then one girl. You are to go into the room at the end of the hall with the red door.”

“The thinking room,” Del muttered under her breath.

“Dr. Graford will look you over and then send you back out here. You may begin at once.” Miss Chapley motioned to a thin pale girl at the front of the line. “Go ahead.” The girl looked scared as she trudged slowly into the “room with a red door” and entered, closing the door behind her. After a while she came out smiling and gave Miss Clark a paper. Miss Clark looked it over, smiled and motioned for her to go upstairs to her room. Then a boy with black hair went in, and soon returned smiling. This process was repeated again and again and Del began to think that perhaps there was nothing much wrong after all. But then one coughing boy went into the room and when he returned he was not smiling as the others had done. He gave his paper questioningly to Miss Chapley instead of Miss Clark. Mrs. Chapley looked over the paper quickly and pointed to the large room at the other end of the hall. “Please go wait in there until we are finished.” The boy sent a last look toward his friends lined up on the stairs and went bravely into the big room and stood there alone. As more and more of the children were made to go into the big room Del began to feel nervous. Mosquitoes buzzed about in the hot suffocating room. Mrs. Chapley explained that she was very sorry about the bugs but if they did not open the windows, the close stonewalls and fearsome heat would surely make them all sick. Finally it was Del’s turn. She went slowly and stiffly to the thinking room and knocked twice on the door.

There was silence for a moment then the words, “come in.” Dr. Graford paced unhappily across the floor. Hardly looking at Del he motioned her to a nearby chair. Del nervously sat down. Once more there was a large gap of silence before Dr. Graford turned and asked, “How do you feel today?”

“Well, fine, Sir. It is a bit hot though.” Del felt her answer was silly but Dr. Graford seemed to take it quite seriously. He came up beside her and put his hand over her head. Then taking out a piece of paper scribbled something down. Open your mouth please. Del opened her mouth and the doctor looked inside, still scribbling on his paper.

“How old are you?”

“Fourteen,” answered Del uncertainly. *What was he getting at?*

“Do you feel feverish?”

“No.”

“Have you been coughing?”

“No.”

“Have you been feeling weak at all?”

“No, just tired from the heat. And I’m hungry now, Sir. Miss Chapley didn’t give us breakfast yet.”

The doctor mumbled something then wrote some more on his paper. “Are you a good listener?”

“Yes,” Del lied.

“Are you obedient?”

Del felt she could not lie on such a thing as this. “Sometimes, Sir.”

“Hmmm,” He mumbled. He handed Del the paper he had been writing on and pointed towards the door. “I believe you are quite well. Give this paper to Miss Clark.” Del nodded as meekly as possible and left the room, closing the door firmly behind her.

“Here,” Said Del as she handed her paper to Miss Clark.

Miss Clark looked the paper over quickly and smiled. “You can head on into your room, Delaney.” Del gave Miss Clark a quick smile before she went upstairs, walking between the lines of children. When she reached the spot where Flo, Jane, and Polly stood she mouthed, “Bye.” The girls gave Del a quick smile as she continued up the stairs to the bedroom.

## CHAPTER THREE

### To the Country

It was nearly three o’clock in the afternoon. Inspections had been done nearly an hour and a half ago but no one knew what was going to happen now.

Del and Flo sat on their beds in their room, silent as stone. “What do you think they’ll do to Jane and Polly?” Flo asked, breaking the silence.

Del sighed. Both Jane and Polly had not made it past inspection and nothing had been seen of Isaac. “Maybe they will just take them to a hospital.”

“But that costs money,” Snapped Florence. Del shrugged not feeling like arguing. There was a knock at the door.

Del and Flo looked at each other. “Who is it?” Called Del standing up.

“Miss Clark,” Came the reply. Del opened the door and there stood Miss Clark looking tired and overworked. “May I come in?” Del and Flo nodded and she entered closing the door behind her. “I actually came to talk to you, Delaney.”

“Yes?”

“Dr. Graford seems to think you are in very good medical condition and since you seem not to have any signs of the fever you are to be sent away... out of the city for a few weeks along with many other children who are also well.” Del, for once, was absolutely speechless. “We have contacted some farms in the north of Pennsylvania and some families are willing to take in a few orphans until this little epidemic clears up. Since you are fourteen years old and healthy you are one of those chosen children.” Miss Clark glanced at Florence. “Miss Chapley insists that children over the age of fifteen are to stay and help with the sick.” Flo looked down at her tattered shoes. She had just recently turned fifteen.

“But...” Del began, stumbling over her words. “Why can’t I just stay here in the city?”

Miss Clark looked away. “It seems that our orphanage is not the only place suffering from fever. Other outbreaks have been occurring as well. The doctor said that it is believed the heat might have something to do with the fever...and we were all out for the benefit picnic about three weeks ago, and the weather was terribly hot. The doctor said that it takes a few weeks for the sickness to contract. And you...”

“I wasn’t at the picnic,” Del finished for her, remembering that she had not been allowed out to the picnic because of not doing her chores and talking back to Miss Chapley.

“You and the other selected children will be leaving tomorrow. Make sure your bag is properly packed.”

With that she was gone and Del, after a moment of shock, reached under her bed, pulled out her small drawstring bag and slowly began to pack her clothes inside.



Del blinked away tears the next morning as she gave Flo a hug goodbye. “I’ll write to you, I promise.”

Flo shrugged trying to act unconcerned. “It’s all right if you don’t remember.”

“I’ll remember, Flo.” The two girls hugged again as Del hurried out the door into the hallway where the line of other “selected children” waited, chattering to each other.

“Quiet Children!” Called Miss Chapley. “Single file down the stairs please!” Everyone complied with the order without complaint. Miss Chapley walked up the stairs checking off names on her paper. Finally when she reached the end of the line she directed everyone down the hall and out the big door.

Del had spent years trying to escape from these very doors and now, the wide unforgiving steel gates at the entrance were opened easily for her. The day was cloudy but the heat was still intense. Del swiped her forehead as she was helped into one of the many waiting carriages along with three other children. The driver looked over his grubby passengers disdainfully but turned forward and clicked to the horses. They started off and Del, jolting forward, watched from her seat as the orphanage faded in the distance.



“How far now?” Complained the girl sitting next to Del. She had mousy brown hair and lots of freckles. Del had seen her before and talked to her occasionally but had never known her personally. It seemed the only thing Del and the girl, named Trudy, had in common was that they had both had the misfortune of ending up in the same orphanage...and the same carriage.

The driver called back stiffly, “we will get there when we get there.”

“Humph,” Trudy groaned sitting back in her seat with her arms folded across her chest. Del grinned at the girl across from her and, sliding down on her seat crossed her arms over her chest and stuck out her lip in a pouty-fashion, imitating Trudy. The girl, whose name was Mary, covered her mouth with a hand and began to giggle.

Trudy, who never noticed anyone else but herself, sighed and said, “Would anyone like their hair braided? I’m very good at braiding.” Mary, Del, and the other girl named, Gretchen, all looked at each other in dismay.

“How about you, Delaney?” Asked Trudy.

“You can call me Del.” Del answered ignoring the braid question.

Trudy would not be put out. “You have such nice hair. Very black though, like an Indian. You look like an Indian too, except for your eyes. I’ve never seen an Indian with blue eyes before.” Del said nothing. “Please?” Trudy begged. Del was about to offer to throw Trudy off the carriage when, as a second thought turned her back to Trudy and with

nimble fingers undid her unruly hair that, when un-braided, reached to her lower back. Trudy fairly squealed in delight as she began to painfully comb out tangles in Del's straight black hair. Del did not like that fact that Trudy was doing her hair, and would no doubt be looking for congratulation at the end, but Del had suddenly thought of showing up at some farm with her hair looking like a bush. Her dress was bad enough. She might as well try to do something about her hair. After much fussing and pulling out tangles with rapid jerks Trudy finally wove Del's hair into a smooth braid and tied a thin strip of fabric on the end.

"It's perfect!" Trudy complemented herself.

"Thank you." Del said shortly without any emotion in her voice.

"Look!" Said Gretchen suddenly, pointing out the open windows of the carriage. Everyone looked and in a moment were completely drawn by the beautiful landscape of fields of hay, grass, and trees in the surrounding forest. Every now and then they would pass by a farm where sheep grazed the pasture and roosters cackled from their perch on a wooden fence. The smells of the crowded city were gone and fresh air whipped up and cooled off the hot passengers. As the day wore on the girls spent all their time looking out the windows until it became too dark to see much.

At about 8:30 Mary was dropped off at one of the farms and at nearly 9:00 the driver called out, "here's the stop for Miss Delaney McArthur." Del, feeling very small despite the grand announcement, picked up her bag and after saying goodbye to Trudy and Gretchen opened the carriage door and jumped out. As her feet hit the ground the feeling of mud sucking on her shoes let her know she was certainly in the country. Closing the carriage door behind her Del walked along through the grass and mud towards the house that sat on the hill shadowed by darkness and surrounded by leafy trees. Del swallowed hard as she finally reached the door. She knocked twice. The door opened, as simultaneously, the sound of the horses' hooves from the carriage began clip-clopping away. In the doorway stood a girl who Del guessed to be about sixteen years old. She was wrapped in a long blanket and a nightcap sat sideways on her head. Her first look at Del was a bit of shock, which would have been the usual reaction when a girl who looked very much like an Indian showed up on your doorstep.

"Hello, you must be the girl from the...." She trailed off and began anew. "I'm sorry, we didn't expect you till tomorrow."

Del shrugged a little. "We made better time than we thought we would."

The girl smiled and said, "My name is Elizabeth, but everyone calls me Bethie."

"I'm Delaney...but everyone calls me Del."

Bethie smiled again and said, "Come in. Would you like something to eat? Some bread and soup perhaps?"

"Uh, no, thank you. I'm pretty tired." Del said, thinking of the soup at the orphanage with no meat and specks of uncooked fat floating on the surface.

"All right then. You can come right up to bed."

As Del stepped inside and looked about the small room, which appeared to be the kitchen she asked, "is everyone asleep?"

"Oh, yes," Said Bethie. "The youngin's went to bed at near to eight and Pa and Ma were in bed near half an hour ago."

Del blinked in disbelief. She was lucky to be asleep by ten o'clock back the orphanage. "Why so early?"

As Bethie lifted up a glowing candle off the table she gave Del a questioning look. "Because everyone has to be up early...I get up at 5:00 and so does my sister Peace. Since we're the oldest ones we have to be up early to help. How old are you?"

"I'm Fourteen," Answered Del as she followed Bethie out of the kitchen and up a stairway.

"Mm," said Bethie, continuing up the stairs. "Peace will be fourteen in a month. You two will no doubt be good friends." Somehow Del doubted she could get along well with a farm girl who got up at 5:00 in the morning and went to bed at 8:00. Bethie motioned for her to be quiet when they reached the top of the stairs. They walked past two doors and then at the third door Bethie walked up and opened it. She nodded at Del to go in and she followed behind. The room was small and somewhat warm, though certainly not as hot as the orphanage. There were two beds in the room and one stuffed mattress on the floor. In one bed a lump under the blanket was no doubt the person they were being quiet for. Bethie pointed to the mattress covered with a quilt and whispered, "you'll sleep there." She then pointed to a blanket strung across one of the room's corners. "You can change into your nightgown there and here's the candle." Del took the candle unsteadily. "Good night." Bethie said with a smile, slipping into her own bed.

"Good night," Del whispered. She stood in the dark a moment and then, after a moment decided not to change into her nightgown and instead just take off her shoes and get into bed. Blowing out the candle Del got into bed, and kicking off the quilt lay there in a silent room with two other people who were practically strangers. The sound of crickets outside was comforting and it lulled her to sleep.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Farm Life

Del felt as though she had hardly closed her eyes before the sound of feet shuffling on the floor woke her. She started to open her eyes but then, thought better of it and pretended to sleep.

An unfamiliar girl voice was heard. "Is that *her*?"

Bethie's voice whispered back, "Yes, it's her. Her name is Delaney...Del." There was the sound of footsteps coming close to Del's bed. "Peace!" Bethie warned.

"Why, she looks like an Indian!" The girl, now obviously Peace whispered hoarsely.

"Well, it doesn't matter does it?"

"No, no of course not. I just wasn't expecting it."

"Her eyes are blue though," Whispered Bethie.

"How old is she?"

"Fourteen."

"Only fourteen? She looks older."

"She's tall."

"When did she become an orphan?"

"I do not know."

"How long is she staying?"

"I do not know that either. Hush now, you'll wake her."

“*Shouldn’t* we wake her?”

“We’ll have to ask Pa. She is a guest after all. “

“But she will be here for a long time. She can’t be a guest forever.”

“Well, she may not *be* here long. Now, Peace, sit down so I can braid your hair.”

There was the sound of bed covers rustling and then silence as Bethie no doubt braided Peace’s hair. Del looked out at them from under her eyelashes. She could only see Peace’s back and the long blonde hair that was being braided. Once the braid was finished Bethie tied on her apron over her brown skirt. Peace pinned a neckerchief around her neck and then they were both out the door, closing it softly behind them. Del, noticing it was before dawn and the room was still quite dark, closed her eyes once more and fell into a deep sleep.



Del hurriedly ran her fingers through her hair and smoothed out her dress. It was late. She knew that. Probably near noon. How could she have slept so long? After making herself look as presentable as possible she walked over to the door of the bedroom and went down the stairs. She heard talking downstairs and she suddenly felt very out of place. The only person she had met was Bethie. She knew no one else. Del hesitated on the stairs wondering if it would be better to get back into bed and pretend she was still asleep.

At that moment Peace came out of the kitchen and began up the stairs. Seeing Del she jumped back in surprise and laughed. “I was just commin’ up to get you. It’s time for dinner.”

Del nodded and began down. “I’m sorry I slept so late...what time is it?”

“‘Bout 12:30,” answered Peace inspecting Del carefully. Del did the same to Peace. The girl was plain, but she had a ready smile and twinkling brown eyes. Her long blonde hair was braided neatly behind her back and she was quite short, if she was in fact thirteen like Bethie had said. Peace looked as though she was going to burst with questions but she was silent as she showed Del into the kitchen. The small room was filled with people bustling about. There were two small boys, probably about seven-years-old, who ran about from here to there gathering up food in bowls and taking it to the table in the room connecting the kitchen. An older woman in her thirties or forties, probably “Ma,” stood at the stove ladling out stew. Bethie stood nearby cutting bread into thick slices. A tall boy, maybe nineteen, was gathering up spoons. They were all talking and didn’t seem to notice the new arrival until Peace said in a calm voice, “Here is our guest.” Del thought no one would hear the girl’s gentle voice but everyone turned and looked at Del.

“Well, hello, dear!” The woman came up and smiled in a friendly manner. “I’m Mrs. Moyer. But most everyone here calls me Ma. You can call me what you like.” Del smiled, somehow not feeling quite ready to call someone else “ma”.

“I’m Delaney...but you may call me Del. I like it better.”

“All right, Del. Let me introduce you to everyone. You’ve met Bethie of course.” Del nodded and smiled at Bethie who smiled back. “And these are my boys here, Nate and Jonathan.” Ma motioned to the two younger boys who were calmly filling up cups of water. “This is Aaron,” Ma nodded towards the older boy. “He and Bethie will be getting married this fall.” Bethie blushed and Del blinked. She would have never imagined that

Bethie would be a married woman in a few months. “And of, course this is Peace. Ma smiled at her youngest daughter.”

“Pa’s out in the fields,” Peace explained. “Shall I fetch him Ma?”

“Yes, go. It’s near time to eat. Everyone to the table.” As Peace left to call her father Del followed Nate who was carrying the last cup of water to the table. The table was small but somehow they had managed to fit seven chairs around it. Bethie, coming in with a wooden plate of bread, motioned for Del to set down in one of the chairs. Del sat down feeling somewhat out of place since it seemed everyone was working on something but her. Peace came in and after asking if she could help anywhere and finding everything was in order, sat down beside Del. Slowly, one by one everyone came to the table, taking and laughing merrily.

“Pa” was the last to arrive. He had brown hair and a beard and looked friendly.

“Well, hello, you must be our new visitor,” he said, addressing Del.

“Yes,” she nodded.

“Glad to see you’re finally up.”

Del squirmed a bit nervously. “I don’t usually get up too early.”

“Well, you’ll be used to it in no time,” Pa said smiling.

*Used to it in no time?* Del doubted this. Soon everyone was seated and Del was just about to reach for a slice of the sweet smelling bread when everyone took each other’s hands and Pa said the blessing. Del watched everyone from under her eyelashes during the prayer and got a good look at Aaron and Pa, of whom she had seen the least. In doing so she also missed a good chunk of what Pa was saying. When the prayer was finished everyone, except a somewhat dim-witted Del, said “Amen” and they began to eat. The soup was delicious...unlike any Del remembered having in her whole life. The bread was light and the fresh butter spread on top melted in her mouth. Once everyone had finished eating Aaron and Pa went back out to work on the fields, which were suffering badly from the drought. Nate and Jonathan went outside also to water the small plants nearby the house. Bethie set out to sew some clothes that needed mending and Peace went to get a pail to gather blueberries. No one invited Del to come along and feeling quite left out, Del stood in the kitchen with Ma wondering what to do. But it seemed Ma had plans of her own, for she invited Del onto the front porch to help her shell peas for dinner. Del felt she would have much rather done something else more exciting like ride a horse or go exploring along the fields, but she agreed and followed Ma out of the kitchen.

As the two sat, Ma shelling the peas and Del destroying them with her clumsy fingers, a cool wind blew up and rustled the branches of the trees above them. “Well, now Del,” Said Ma smiling. “How do you like it here so far?”

“I think it’s beautiful,” Said Del, looking up at the far away fields and nearby stream.

“I am glad, very glad. Mr. Moyer and I have decided that we would like to build onto our house. Add a room or two. And in the fall Bethie will be leaving to live with Aaron so they’ll be plenty of room.” Del began to pick up on where this might be going. “Pa and I made the choice that we would let an orphan into our home and we believed that God would choose the right child and let her fill up the empty space in our house.” Del swallowed and waited, but Ma said no more and Del was left with a somewhat fuzzy impression that if she was willing she could stay at the farm...perhaps for the rest of her life. Ma skipped ahead. “Anyhow, I wanted to let you know some things about living here. I want you to feel like part of our family, but in doing so I also want you to become accustomed to life here.”

“Life *here*?” Del could not resist frowning a little.

“Yes, Peace will help you but you will be expected to do your chores around here like everyone else.” Del’s lips were in a straight line and Ma hurried on. “At first you may not find your chores much fun, but you’ll get used to them after a while and maybe even *enjoy* doing them.”

Del said nothing. She had expected living here to be a break from the boring long days at the orphanage. Instead she would be at work here too. *How typical.*

Peace came out of the house holding two pails. She looked expectantly at Ma and her mother smiled and nodded. “Do you want to come and pick blueberries with me, Del?” Peace asked, holding out a pail.

“Yes, I would.” The basket of peas almost dumped out of Del’s lap as she stood.

“Or... do you still need her help, Ma?” Peace asked as a second thought.

Del felt impatient. *Ma was much quicker than her anyway. Why would she need help?*

“No, I’m fine, dear, run along. If you hurry I can make a blueberry pie in time for dinner.” Peace rewarded her mother with a bright smile and, giving Del her pail, the two set off towards the blueberry bushes that ran along the edge of the forest.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Work

“Del! Del!”

Del grunted and turning in her bed pulled the pillow over her head. “Bethie,” Called Peace’s voice in exasperation, “She won’t get up again.”

The sound of footsteps were heard and Bethie’s voice called over her, “Del, you have to get up. The milking needs to be done and it’s your job. I’m not doing it for you again.” Del pretended she had fallen back asleep. Bethie shook her a little and then sighed. “Try again in a few minutes, Peace. We need to get downstairs and feed the animals.”

“All right,” Said Peace getting up and following Bethie out the door. Once the sound of their footsteps drowned away Del stretched and sat up. It was *much* too early. Probably 5:30 am. Instead of getting up Del re-lit the half melted candle, since it was still a bit dark outside, and pulled back her mattress to find the letter she had written to Florence last night. All the “youngin’s” were supposed to be in bed by 8:00 but that was much too early for Del. She had stayed up until about nine-thirty writing by candlelight. Del settled down to re-read the letter.

Dear Flo

How are you? How are Jane and Polly? Have you talked to Isaac yet? I wish I could say I was fine. I suppose do not have the fever but I think I would rather be back with you helping. I have been here five days and I am still not used to it. . You will not believe what time I must ~~get~~ get up every morning. 5:00!!! Well, I get up at 5:30 or 6:00 most of the time. I refus refuse

to get up that early so I act as if I am asleep. I know you will think that is funny. There is so much work to do here. It never ends!!!

After I do my morning chores I usually sneak off to walk out in the feilds and wade in the stream. It is so butiful pretty here. Not as hot as in the city either. I wish you were here too. There is a girl named Peace who is my age living here also but she never does anything. It makes me so mad how she never says no and always does whatever she is told!!! She needs to try to live a little. You can't follow rules all your life!!

I have to go. I am supost to be sleeping. We are all supost to be asleep by 8:00!! It is so silly.

Goodbye! I miss you. Please write back. I hope you still have the address from my first letter.

-Del

“Ah, you're finally awake.”

Del jumped as Peace entered the room. “Uh...yes,” Del shoved the paper under her mattress and stood up. “I'll be ready in a minute.”

“You should make your bed,” Peace began, but Del would have none of it.

“Why? It's my bed. I am the one who has to sleep in it even if it's not made.”

“But it's part of your chores. It has to get done, just like everything else.”

“Do you always do exactly what your parents say?” Questioned Del even though she knew the answer.

Peace frowned. “I *have* disobeyed before, if that's what you mean. But I try not to.”

“You need to live a little,” Del quoted from her letter as she picked up her newly made shortgown, brown skirt, apron, and neckerchief, and headed for the dressing-corner behind the blanket.

“Well, if I don't do my chores it will cause everyone a lot of trouble.” Del snorted as she disappeared behind the blanket to dress. “I'll be downstairs,” Peace called, as she headed out the door. Once Del was dressed she too went downstairs and headed outside to the barn. The cow moomed in welcome...or in annoyance... when it saw Del heading for her with the tin-milking pail. Del ignored the cow and began the struggle her way over the wooden gate separating her from the cow. She was really supposed to just open the lock, but it took too long in her opinion. As her boots scraped over the wooden slots the lock jiggled and moaned. As Del gave a final push to get herself over the side the lock let out a final clink and the latch broke. Del groaned. The cow watched her with its big brown eyes. After inspecting the broken lock and then the lazy cow, Del decided she could leave the lock alone for a while. The cow probably wouldn't go anywhere. Del walked over to the cow, and milked her in a rather poorly fashion. She had been given instructions but she hadn't really been listening. After much squeezing Del decided she had enough milk and set off toward the house, pushing the gate closed best she could.

After she delivered the milk to the kitchen, Del, with her feet dragging, re-directed herself to the smokehouse. Reaching the small wooden building Del opened the door and smoke swirled out, as if waiting to be released. Del waited impatiently until some of the smoke had cleared, and then reached up to take out the bacon. It looked very good. Pa had explained that putting meat in the smokehouse would help preserve it for much longer. As Del began to close the door she noticed that the coals were not smoking very much. Pa had

told her not to touch the fire but Del decided it was better to just poke them a bit rather than have the fire go out completely. So, picking up a long stick, Del spent a few moments poking at the fire until the coals became red again, and a few flames licked the edges of the smoldering wood. She then left, holding the bacon far away from her on its metal hook. After reaching the house she was sent to work on churning cream into butter.

Peace, who was slicing up some sort of sticky looking yellow stuff, noticed Del huffing over the hard work of churning. "Soon none of us will have to do that anymore."

"How's that?" asked Del, wondering when this exciting change would occur.

"When we get a new dog. We had a dog named Moses but he died near a month ago."

"Why does a dog make any difference?" Asked Del changing her position.

"Well, there's a treadmill out in the barn. You hook an attachment up to the butter churn and then put the dog on the treadmill. When the dog feels his feet moving under him he'll start walking and it will pump the attachment to the churn...and the pole you're holding will churn the butter."

Del looked doubtful but just said, "Oh."

"No, it really works," laughed Peace.

Del changed the subject. "*What* is that?" She asked motioning to the stuff Peace was cutting into slices.

"Cornmeal mush."

"Is that for the pigs or the chickens?"

"No, it's for us to eat for breakfast."

Del stopped churning to give Peace a look. "I thought you said it was cornmeal. Don't you give that to the animals to eat?"

"Yes, but we can eat it too. Last night Ma boiled up some cornmeal and water until it was thick and then put it in a bowl and let it set out overnight. In the morning it's firm enough to cut into slices. Then I'll fry the slices in a pan and serve it with maple syrup." Peace closed her eyes and sighed. "I love fried mush."

Del made a disgusted face. "Don't sound that exciting to me."

"Just wait till you try it," Said Peace. Del found at breakfast that Peace was not fooling and they were expected to eat the stuff. After eating three pieces of bacon and ignoring the fried mush with syrup on her plate, Del finally surrendered and tried a small bite. It was actually quite good and Del ate it all. After breakfast Del helped Pa and Aaron hitch up the horses, which was quite an ordeal. By the time they were properly hitched up Del was hot and tired. She was supposed to help Ma make pies for the up coming barn-raising party but instead she slipped away to the forest and picked flowers. She then headed for the stream and, taking off her socks and shoes dipped her feet in the icy water. When she heard Peace calling her name she hid in the shade of the great Oak tree and waited until Peace finally gave up and went inside the house. Del found blueberries and after eating her fill finally headed for the house. She found everyone in a great uproar.

"What's the matter?" Del asked, dashing up to Peace who was heading back towards the stream with a bucket.

"The smokehouse..." Peace began, but continued running. Del turned and saw smoke billowing in the air.

## CHAPTER SIX

# Disagreements

“Del, did you touch the smokehouse fire this morning when you went to get the bacon?” Pa’s kind brown eyes bored into Del’s soul but she said nothing. The whole family was assembled in the family room. The fire from the smokehouse had been put out but the fire had destroyed not only the smoking meat, but the smokehouse itself. Pa said a new one would have to be built.

Ma said quietly but firmly, “Del, please answer the question.” Del stared fixedly at her shoes.

Finally she said quietly, “I thought the fire was going out...so I just poked at it a bit. I didn’t do any harm.”

Pa sighed. “I wish it were that easy Del. It takes time to build a new smokehouse. The meat that was inside was also ruined. We needed that meat to eat over the summer.”

Del said nothing. No one else said anything either. It seemed they were waiting for an apology. *It was an accident*, Del thought bitterly. *There’s not reason I should apologize.* After a moment Pa stood and, after giving Ma a long look headed out the door. Aaron followed him.

As everyone began to stand, Aaron suddenly cried out, “Ma, your vegetables! Lady’s in your vegetables!” Everyone ran to the window to see the brown cow chewing happily on Ma’s fresh vegetables.

“My goodness!” Cried out Ma, dashing out the door and taking a hold of the stubborn cow. “How did that cow get out? Quick Aaron, get Lady round the back and I’ll push her out by the front. Oh, sakes alive, that cow’s stepping on every one of my vegetables. Oh, not the cucumber and lettuce! Oh!”

As everyone hurried out front to help with the removal of the cow Del hung back remembering earlier that day when she had broken the lock on the gate to the cow’s pen. Knowing the blame would no doubt find it’s way back to her, Del slipped away again and spent hours at the stream hoping no one would find her. As darkness began to slowly creep in it got slightly cooler and Del tired of splashing in the stream. She put on her socks and shoes feeling very nervous out there alone in the dark. Del had just decided to spend the night outside when a rooster, who was nearer than Del would have liked, suddenly cocked loudly. The loud sound in the darkness sent Del running back towards the house without looking back.

When Del entered the kitchen Ma and Bethie were covering up leftovers from dinner. They had already eaten...without her. “Oh, hello,” began Bethie but Del ignored her and continued on up into the family room. Bethie followed her and yawning said, “you ready to come up to bed?”

“No.” Stated Del flatly. “It’s too early”

Bethie sighed. “Ma and Pa say you have to be in bed by eight. It doesn’t matter if you sleep or not.”

Del frowned. “Why do you always listen to them?”

Bethie, who was tired and not in the best temper, frowned back. “Because it’s the right thing to do.”

“Haven’t you ever thought of *not* listening for once? Your life will never be exciting if you always do *exactly* what you are told.”

“If you would have done what you were told we would still have a smokehouse, meat, and vegetables!” Cried Bethie. In a moment she lowered her voice and tried to reason with her. “Del, since the day you came here you haven’t been willing to do anything. You help a little but then you go off and we don’t see you until dinner. We need your help. You are an extra mouth to feed and it’s important that everyone does their share of the work.”

“Well, I can’t help it if I’m not a farm girl!” Del stormed, her temper rushing out.

Bethie, keeping her voice calm stared hard at Del. “Anyone can learn. You just have to be willing to listen. Remember the day you made the biscuits?” Del pretended to ignore Bethie. “Ma told you to keep an eye on them, but you went off to see the lambs. They were too burnt to eat by the time you returned. Today you were supposed to help make pies...Ma had to do all the work by herself because you were off exploring. And you stay up all night writing by candlelight even though you are supposed to be asleep and you aren’t supposed to use candles for things like that. You’ve melted a whole one already.”

“I didn’t come here to work *all day!*” Cried Del angrily.

“Well, don’t expect anything better, because that’s how it is on a farm. It’s not always easy but if we all work together everything will turn out all right.” Before Del could reply Bethie headed upstairs without another word. Sitting there all alone in the room Del decided then and there that she had to run away. This farm was certainly not the place for her and it was time she left.



Del tiptoed downstairs clasping her drawstring bag packed with her clothes, and holding a flickering candle. It was very late but she wanted to be sure everyone was asleep. She was a bit worried Bethie might suspect her to try to run away after their fight earlier that night but it seemed that Bethie slept quite soundly. And besides, thought Del, she wouldn’t miss me even if I left. Once Del reached the bottom of the steps she headed for the kitchen. She was very hungry and she was sure Ma wouldn’t mind if she just took a few pieces of bread and an apple or two from the cellar. As Del walked through the kitchen towards the cupboard she noticed something white lying on the table. Taking a second look she realized it was a letter...addressed to Delaney McArthur! Del pounced on the letter, recognizing Flo’s handwriting. Tearing it open she began to read:

“Dear Del...”

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### The Letter

Dear Del,

I was very glad when I got your first letter with the address to write to...even though the letter was VERY short. I wish I knew more about how you are doing. I’m sure you are

wondering about everything here and I must tell you the bad news right off. Jane is dead. She died the day after you left. I wish I didn't have to tell you this over a letter. I was with her when she died since I am helping with the sick. (No one was taken to the hospital after all. The sick were taken to the old boarding house down the street near the blacksmith's shop and kept there) Jane looked awful. She was sick all the time and I had to bathe her over and over again. Her eyes turned yellow and her skin turned yellow. She didn't even know who I was anymore. She kept calling me mama and saying she was glad she was going to heaven to be with "baby brother" and "papa." Oh, Del, I was never so scared in my life. I can still remember her face. Then she breathed in and I waited for her to breathe out but she didn't and I called Miss Clark and she said that Jane had "left us". I cried for so long. It all happened so fast. If only I would have helped Jane better she might be alive now. I keep thinking that.

Polly and Isaac are improving. I keep a close eye on them too. Polly is being very brave and has stopped crying now. Isaac is often feverish but he is over the worst, doctor says. Isaac says he's glad you are safe at the farm and Polly says to send her a baby lamb. I told her how silly that was and that instead, when she is well, she can come and visit you, if it's all right with your farm family.

Miss Chapley is sick as well but the doctor says it's not the yellow fever, just a normal cold. I am so glad. You might think that is strange, coming from me talking about Miss Chapley, but the fever is not something to take lightly. I've learned that over these past days.

Well, I must close. There is still much to be done and surprisingly, without me, things could fall apart. We are all important here. If I don't do my job giving medicine children could become even sicker. I don't like the pressure of knowing what hangs in the balance of me working, but there's something satisfying about being depended on. I never really was before.

I am so glad you are safe on the farm away from the heat and sickness of the city. Maybe Polly, Isaac, and I will one day have the good luck to be sent to the country too... If only Jane had been sent to the country long ago. I'm happy you have such a wonderful chance to enjoy your life away from the orphanage. Maybe they will adopt you! That would, indeed be great good fortune!

Your Friend,  
Florence M. Clever

## CHAPTER EIGHT

# A Wonderful Chance

Peace woke at two-thirty in the morning to the sound of crying. It was not a loud sobbing but a quiet, held in, howling cry, no doubt muffled by a pillow. At first Peace thought that perhaps it was Bethie, since she could not imagine Del crying but, sure enough, the sound came from Del's side of the room. Peace slipped out of bed her feet hitting the braided cornhusk mat on the floor. She tiptoed over to Del's mattress and gently

touched the lump wrapped up in a blanket with its head under the pillow. Del shot up in surprise and seeing Peace stared a moment then held onto her, crying hard. As Peace held Del in a warm hug she asked her what was the matter.

“Oh, Peace. My friend Flo wrote a letter to me and it came today. I didn’t see it until now. My friend Jane just died. She just died! And I never got to really say goodbye...and now I’ll never have the chance. And I was so mean to her sometimes. Why couldn’t it have been me?” Del sobbed.

“Because. It’s not your time yet, Del. You have so much more life to live. Please don’t say that!” Peace was crying now too, even though she hadn’t even known that Del had a friend called Jane until then.

As Del’s crying became louder Bethie sat up in bed and asked worriedly, “What happened? What’s the matter?”

“One of Del’s friends died,” Explained Peace, “She just got the letter now.” Del waited for Bethie to say, “*Why was she up reading the letter now? Breaking the rules again?*” But she didn’t say that at all. Instead she too came down and folded Del and Peace in a great hug.

Once Del finally stopped crying she said, “I’ve been so awful. The way I’ve been acting...”

“Shh,” Interrupted Bethie. “Don’t worry about it now. Just go to sleep. You’ll feel better in the morning, believe me.” Peace and Bethie slipped back into their own beds and Del fell into a tired sleep, worn out from crying.



The next morning Del woke to the sun, shining warm on her face. She sprang up. No one had woken her up! Why? It was an important rule! Then she remembered last night and realized that she had been up crying late into the night. No wonder she was so tired. Del quickly gathered up her clothes and changed. As she put away her nightgown she noticed her un-sent letter to Flo sticking partway out from under her mattress. Del picked it up and read a few lines. All complaining. Complaining in near every sentence. She thought of Flo’s words, “...If only Jane had been sent to the country long ago. I’m happy you have such a wonderful chance to enjoy your life away from the orphanage.”

She could be laying in the old boarding house right now, sick and feverish, not knowing who stood near her or where she was. And she was complaining...about being *here*? On a farm with good food and people who were willing to take her in and make her feel like family? Del ripped up the letter she had written and promised to herself to write a new one when she got the chance. She then hurried downstairs, almost running over the cat, Mittens, who stalked lazily along the stairway doing it’s job on that farm...hunting mice.

It was after breakfast but when Del came into the kitchen Ma and Bethie were just covering up a plate. “Oh, Del, I’m glad your up,” Exclaimed Ma. “We were just about to pack away your food. Bethie, dear, would you go and heat this up?” Before Bethie could reply Del hurried over and took the plate.

“No...I can heat it up...if you show me how.”



It was not easy for Del to listen to instruction...to be obedient like Peace and willing to stay in the warm and stuffy house when she could be outside splashing in the brook. But, like Ma had said in the very beginning, once Del began to embrace her work it became quite interesting. Del would get up every morning, at 5:00 with Bethie and Peace. Del found that it was much easier to get up that early when she went to bed at 8:00 like she was supposed to. After making her bed, Del milked the cow and helped clean out the horse's stalls. She helped grind corn into small pieces and fed the animals. She helped Ma in the kitchen baking and cleaning. She helped Bethie mend clothes and even helped take out the growth tucks in Peace's skirt. Del helped Ma make a brine of salt, brown sugar, and water to let the butchered meat sit in. Later, Ma explained, they would hang the meat in the new smokehouse Del was helping Pa build...along with the new gate for the cow's pen with a wooden latch. All in all, Del's life became a sort of happy routine, and despite her original idea that she had to "work all day"; Dell found that when you enjoy your work, things become very easy. One evening during dinner Del stood and cleared her throat. Pa, Ma, Aaron, Bethie, Peace, Nate, and Jonathan all stared at Del.

"I just wanted to tell you all something," Del began nervously. Everyone waited expectantly. "When...When I came here I didn't listen to anything ya'll told me... I just ignored everything...because I wanted to have fun all day and not work. Well, I'm workin' now and you all have made it more fun for me then ever before. I just wanted to say thank you...and how sorry I am about...how I acted. And...if you think God chose the right orphan to come and live with you...she's ready to stay...that is...if you still want her."

## CHAPTER NINE

### A Farm Girl

Dear Flo

Hello! I'm sorry it took me so long to write back. I've been working hard. I was so sorry to hear about Jane. I wish I had been there to help you though the pain of it all. I hope Isaac and Polly give you lots of support.

In your last letter you asked how I was doing. I don't like to brag (you know *that* is a lie) but I am doing wonderful. Life here is so different then in the city. Nothing is crowed...there is lots of open space and blue skies. Like I said I am working hard but I enjoy it very much! Remember how you said in your last letter that things would fall apart without you and it was nice to be depended on? Well, I think I know what you mean. I like being depended on too, and even though I'm still learning, everyone here has learned to trust me and that's something / never had much of before.

I will make sure to have you over in the fall and we can pick apples together. There are so many apple trees! Mrs. Moyer...Ma...says that by December we won't want to eat another apple! So, please tell me all about you. In your last letter you talked about everyone but *you*. I want to know how you are doing.

Well, before I go I want to tell you that my "good fortune" has come true. I am staying with the Moyer's...for good! They want to adopt me! I really can't believe it's true. But here is the best news: Ma and Pa are adding onto their house and the older girl Bethie is getting married and will be leaving so there will be plenty of room. Ma and Pa say that you and Isaac can come and live here too! Can you believe it? And Don't worry about Polly...Bethie and her new husband Aaron would like to have a little girl and would love to adopt Polly!

Please Write Back soon! I can't wait to hear what you have to say about this! Miss you!

Your Friend,  
Del, the farm girl

THE END