

#1 BESTSELLING AUTHOR

JOHANNA LINDSEY



GLORIOUS ANGEL

Johanna Lindsey

Glorious Angel



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*For my mother,
whose love and encouragement are priceless*



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Angela Sherrington tossed another log on the hearth. “Damn myself, anyhow!” she cursed as she glared at the sparks shooting out onto the floor.

If only she hadn’t been so foolish as to waste matches! Now she was forced to keep the fire burning all day and all night. Since the matches had run out last week, the shack Angela called home had been hell to live in.

Angela cast another glowering look at the fire and then she walked out onto the narrow porch in front of the little one-room shack. She was hoping for a breeze, but it was at least eighty degrees. She cursed herself again. In this sorry year of 1862, matches were scarce. The war had made every necessity scarce, and she would just have to be more careful.

The Sherrington farm, if it could be considered a farm at all, was less than a quarter mile from the Mobile River, and about a half day’s ride from Mobile, Alabama’s largest city. The fields surrounding the farm were newly bare, as was the harvest shed, with its rotting walls and leaky roof. The house had once been whitewashed, but now it was necessary to strain to see the few patches of remaining paint. Two wicker chairs in deplorable condition and a wooden crate that sufficed for a table were on the porch.

Reluctantly, Angela went back inside the house and began kneading dough at the kitchen table. The heat was wearing her down, what with the fire blazing behind her and the sun pouring in through the windows in front of her. But equally wearing was the worry over her father. He had gone to Mobile yesterday to sell the last of their corn crop. He should have returned yesterday afternoon, but for the fourth time in her life, Angela had spent the night by herself. It was a sad fact that all four times had happened since the war.

With a heavy sigh, Angela gazed out the cracked window to the red field. The field should have been plowed that morning to make it ready for the new crop of peas and lima beans. She would have begun the task herself if they owned more than one mule. But they didn’t, and her father had old Sara hitched to the wagon. Damn his old leather hide, where *was* he?

Angela had been up since well before dawn. That was the time she liked to clean house, the only time of day in summer when it was cool enough. Her home wasn’t much, but nobody could say it wasn’t clean.

Angela wiped at the sweat on her face. She tried to stop worrying, but she just couldn’t. The other three times he had stayed away all night had been when he was too drunk to make it back to his wagon. She hoped he was only drunk, and that he hadn’t gotten into a fight.

Angela could take care of herself. She wasn’t worried about that. Even when her father was home, he was often drunk and lying in bed. She hated it, but there was nothing she could do to stop his drinking. William Sherrington was a drunk.

Of necessity, she had learned how to hunt game. Otherwise she might have starved waiting for him to come out of his stupors. She could kill a moving rabbit in only one shot.

Yes, she could take care of herself, but that didn’t stop her from being uneasy whenever her

father was away.

~~A while later the sound of an approaching wagon made Angela's spirits rise. It was about time!~~
And now that her anxiety was over, her anger surfaced. Her father would get an earful this time.

But it was not old Sarah who came loping around the tall cedars. Two gray mares were pulling a dusty, mud-splattered carriage. And the last person she wanted to see was driving that carriage.



Billy Anderson slowed his mares. He had ridden as if an army of Yankees were hot on his tail. The chance he had been waiting for had come unexpectedly this morning, with the knowledge that William Sherrington was passed out drunk in the street, leaving his daughter alone. Billy grinned, recalling the day.

The morning had begun as any other, with the hot summer sun quickly melting any traces of the cool night. It would be another fiercely hot day, a day to fray everyone's nerves, a day to make tempers flare. Billy stretched lazily and wiped the sleep from his eyes. Before opening his father's store for business, he gazed out into the street where hawkers were crying their wares, servants were hurrying to market, children were playing while they had the chance to, before the heat sent everyone scurrying home to hide in their shaded houses.

It wasn't too different from before, Billy thought. At least Alabama was not like other southern states, where battles were being fought. The Union army had been kept out of Alabama. To many people here, the war was not quite real.

Billy snorted. Yankees were cowards—anyone with sense knew that. It was only a matter of time before the Confederacy won the war. Things would be normal again. And Billy's father would be out of debt.

A long sigh escaped him and Billy stretched, trying to shake the sleep from his lanky body. He moved over to the large table covered with bolts of material and fingered the dull cottons resting protectively on top of the more expensive cloths. It had been a long time since anyone had bought even the cheap cottons.

These were hard times for everyone. But that wouldn't last much longer—it couldn't. And one day this store would be Billy's. He didn't have the heart for merchandising, though. He didn't have the heart for much of anything—except whoring.

Billy grinned, his brown eyes crinkling. He sauntered over to the long counter where the money box was kept and sat down heavily on a three-legged stool behind it. Running his hands roughly through his reddish-brown hair, he tilted the stool until his back rested against the shelves behind him and propped his feet up on the counter.

Sam Anderson would take a fit if he found his son like this, but Sam Anderson wouldn't be down for another hour or so, having had a late night with his cronies. Billy's father liked cards and dice, and anything else he could wager on, and Billy just managed to keep quiet every time his father said, "Just one big win, and we'll be out of debt." But Sam Anderson's luck wasn't with him, not the way it had been before the war. He continued to lose and borrow, lose and borrow more.

Billy snapped to attention when the tiny bells above the door jingled. His eyes widened with surprise when two young women entered, their frilly parasols swinging from their wrists, and he recognized nineteen-year-old Crystal Lonsdale, high and mighty princess of The Shadows plantation, and her friend, Candise Taylor. Billy assessed them thoroughly. Crystal was stunning, with wide blue eyes and shimmering blond hair. A trifle skinny for his taste, but certainly a beauty, and one of the

most sought-after females in Mobile County.

~~Candise Taylor was a few years older than Crystal, with raven-black hair tucked neatly under her blue bonnet, and startling blue eyes the color of early dawn. She was the daughter of Jacob Maitland's closest friend, here for a visit from England. She was as lovely as Crystal, with a softer face and gentler manner.~~

Billy came around the counter and approached the two fashionably dressed young women, the one in pink and the other in blue. He wished that he were not so poorly dressed.

“Can I be of service, ladies?” he asked in his most sophisticated voice, a charming smile on his thin lips. Crystal glanced at him briefly, then turned away. “I hardly think so. I can't imagine why Candise wanted to come in here.”

“It never hurts to shop wisely, Crystal,” Candise replied shyly.

Candise looked quite embarrassed, though not nearly as much as Billy as he watched them walk away from him and heard Crystal's annoyed drawl. “Really, Candise! Your daddy's as rich as mine is. Why, when Mr. Maitland asked me to accompany you shoppin', I never dreamed you'd want to come to a place like this!”

Billy bristled. The snobby little bitch! He'd love to throw Crystal Lonsdale out on the street. But he knew his father would horsewhip him if he so much as looked at her funny. She was too close to the Maitland family. Jacob Maitland was a very wealthy man. He was also a man to whom Sam Anderson was deeply indebted.

Billy stalked back to the counter and plopped down on the stool again. He watched the two young women furtively, his freckles noticeable now because his face was pale with anger.

Billy would have given anything to be as rich as Jacob Maitland. Billy had always envied the Maitlands. He could still remember the day they arrived in Mobile, fifteen years before. He had gone to the docks with his father to pick up a shipment of goods for the store. A large ship had just docked and there were Jacob and his wife and their two sons, the only passengers on that fine ship. Billy was awed by their rich clothes, the magnificent carriage awaiting them, the crate after crate after crate of Maitland belongings.

It was currently rumored that Jacob Maitland's business interests were so many that he was one of the richest men in the world. He had properties and businesses, mines, railroads, and countless other investments all over the world. Billy didn't know, but Maitland was surely one of the richest men in Alabama.

There was a man who didn't have to stay in the South while the war was going on, who could be living anywhere in the world. Yet he was a southern gentleman now, and had elected to stay and support the South. And support it he did, with money, and with his younger son Zachary, who had joined the army, leaving the older son, Bradford, to handle the family interests. Now, there was a fellow Billy envied—Bradford Maitland. He had all that money, lived as he pleased, and traveled all over the world.

What luck to be a Maitland! How Billy wished he were one of Jacob Maitland's sons. How often he had dreamed of being part of that family. He didn't have those silly dreams anymore, but the envy was still there.

Billy's attention was abruptly drawn.

“Why, even trash like the Sherringtons come in here,” Crystal was sneering.

“You mean that poor man you pointed out to me? The one lying in the alley?”

“That disgusting wretch we saw lying drunk in the alley. Yes, William Sherrington. Did you know they live only a mile away from Golden Oaks?” Crystal asked her friend disdainfully. “I can't imagine why Jacob Maitland lets a man like that farm his land.”

“I think it's a shame,” Candise ventured.

“Heavens, Candise! You’d pity anyone. Now let’s leave this place before someone sees us here.

~~A smirk formed on Billy’s lips as he watched the two girls leave the store. Yes, run little princess, before any of your fancy friends finds you slumming. Bitch!~~

His blood had quickened as he listened to them discussing Angela Sherrington’s father. That wild, fiery-tempered hellion had been his obsession for a long time. Although she had only just turned fourteen, she had filled out nicely recently. She was the prettiest piece of white trash he’d ever seen.

Billy had hardly recognized her when she came into the store a few months back. No longer a skinny little brat with stringy brown curls, she had started showing curves. And her face had changed. Angela Sherrington was downright pretty. Her eyes were deep violet pools hidden by thick, sooty lashes. Billy had never before seen eyes that color. They could catch and hold attention as if casting a spell.

After that day, Billy had started going out to the Sherrington farm and hiding in the crop of cedars that formed a thick wall in front of the Sherrington shack. He watched her working in the field with her father. She wore tight breeches and a cotton shirt with rolled-up sleeves. Billy couldn’t take his eyes off her.

Billy waited impatiently for his father to come down so he could leave. And when he left the store, he made sure that William Sherrington was just where Crystal had said he was.

Now Billy’s time was at hand. Just thinking about Angela being all alone in that shack caused an ache in his loins. Now he would have her! He could just feel her wiggling beneath him. He would be the first, too, and that counted for a lot. Lord, but he couldn’t wait!

Billy halted the mares and leaped down from his father’s carriage.

“That’s far enough, Billy Anderson.”

Billy smiled. She was going to put up a fight, and that just might be even more fun.

“Now, is that any kind of greetin’, Angela?” he asked indignantly.

He stared at the rifle she held pointed at him but then his eyes moved to her slim hips, outlined by breeches, then up to the tight shirt. Her breasts pressed hard against the rough material. Obviously she wore nothing beneath it.

“What’re you doin’ here, Billy?”

He looked at her face now, smudged with dirt and flour, but still pretty, and then he caught and held her eyes. What he saw surprised him. Was it humor? Was she laughing at him?

“I just came for a visit,” Billy said, running a hand nervously through his hair. “Anythin’ wrong with that?”

“Since when you come visitin’? I thought you was the kind that just hid behind trees, too damn scared to come forward,” she replied.

“So you know about that?” he asked smoothly, though his blush betrayed him.

“Yeah, I know. I seen you plenty times, hidin’ over there,” she said, nodding toward the cedars. “What you been spyin’ on me for?”

“Don’t you know?”

Her eyes widened and seemed to turn a few shades darker, a striking violet-blue. Now there was no trace of humor. “You get, Billy! Get!”

“You sure ain’t bein’ very neighborly, Angela,” he said warily, his dark brown eyes on the rifle held firmly in her hands.

“You ain’t my neighbor, and I got no call to be neighborly to the likes of you.”

“I only came to visit—sit down and talk a spell. Why don’t you put down that rifle and—”

“You admitted why you came, Billy, so don’t be tellin’ me lies now,” she said coldly. “And this here rifle ain’t leavin’ my hands, so why don’t you get your skinny ass on back to the city where you belong.”

“You’re a foul-mouthed little bitch, ain’t you?” he sneered.

~~She smiled, showing gleaming white teeth. “Why, thank you, Billy Anderson. If that ain’t the nicest compliment I ever did get.”~~

He decided on a different approach.

“All right. You know why I came, so why are you bein’ so disagreeable? I’m not just out for a little fun. I’ll take care of you. I’ll set you up in a house in the city. You can leave this little farm and live a life of ease.”

“And what would I have to do in return for this life of ease?” she asked.

“You know the answer to that.”

“Yeah, I know,” she returned. “And my answer is no.”

“What the hell are you savin’ yourself for?” Billy asked, his freckled face showing his irritation and bewilderment.

“Not for the likes of you, that’s for sure.”

“The only thing you got to look forward to is marryin’ another dirt farmer and livin’ just as you are now for the rest of your life. Is that what you want?”

“I got no complaints,” she replied defensively.

“You’re lyin’!” he snapped and started toward her.

“Don’t you come no closer, Billy!” Her voice rose to a high pitch. She stared straight into his angry eyes. “I’m gonna tell you honest that I’ll shoot you without battin’ an eye. I’m sick’n tired of you boys thinkin’ you can have me just for the askin’. Hell, most of you don’t even ask—you just grab. I’ve had it, do you hear? I ain’t got the strength for no more fightin’. But this here rifle’s got strength. It’s got the strength to blow your conceited head off. So you better get before that’s just what happens!”

He backed away, the fury in her voice warning him that she meant what she said. Damn!

“I’ll have you yet, Angela, just remember that!” he called as he climbed back in the carriage, his mouth set in a tight line. “You’re dealin’ with a man now, not a boy!”

She laughed. “I ain’t never shot no man, but I reckon there’s a first time for everythin’. Don’t come back, Billy, or you’ll be the first.”

“I’ll be back,” he promised. “And I’ll *be* the first, only not the way you mean. I will have you, Angela Sherrington, I promise you that.”

Billy Anderson drove away recklessly, taking his fury out on the two hapless gray mares.



Angela slammed the door with a bang and threw the bolt, then collapsed against it, her heart pounding painfully. Icy rage gripped her, as it did every time she was confronted by boys like Billy. What did they think she was, a whore? Of course they did. Why else were they forever grabbing her?

Angela sighed impatiently. She realized she had no one to blame but herself. She used to enjoy whipping any boy who dared to tease her. And that was all they used to do—just tease. It had been a show of strength then. But now it was getting harder and harder to win those fights. The same boys she used to send away with bloodied noses were now almost men.

Angela had always felt awkward around girls, having been raised without a woman. She had run with boys instead, until their constant teasing became unbearable. Soon, girls her own age would have nothing to do with her. And colored girls shied away from her because she was white. The only friend she had was Hannah, kindhearted Hannah.

A knock made Angela start and she clutched the rifle tightly. Had Billy come back already?

“It’s me, child. That boy done gone.”

Hearing Hannah’s voice, Angela threw the door open eagerly and stomped out on the porch.

“That sorry son ov a pig had the nerve to—”

“I knows, Missy. I knows.” Hannah soothed, startled by Angela’s fury. “That boy passed me on the road and I seen him turnin’ to come here, so’s I snuck ’round the trees and was hidin’ behind the house, waitin’ to see iffen you’d need help. O Lordy, Master Maitland sure ain’t gonna like this, he sure ain’t,” Hannah mumbled to herself.

“What?”

“Nothin’, Missy, nothin’,” Hannah said quickly. She put her arm around Angela and urged her to sit on the porch steps. “I guess you’s just growin’ up. Yessum, you sure is.”

Angela wondered briefly why Hannah would mention Jacob Maitland, but Angela wasn’t sure she’d heard correctly, so she let it pass.

Angela had first met Hannah on the day, five years before, when the older woman had emerged from the forest of cedars between Golden Oaks and the Sherringtons’ little farm, saying she was lost and close to fainting from the heat. Angela insisted she come inside and rest. Later, Angela showed Hannah the way back to Golden Oaks.

Angela just couldn’t understand how a servant from Golden Oaks could have gotten lost. All she had to do was go down to the river and follow it. The plantation was only a little ways back from the rolling Mobile River, and clearly visible from the river’s edge. Or else she could have gone along the river road until she came to the long lane of giant live oaks that led to the mansion where the Maitlands lived.

To Angela’s surprise, Hannah returned a week after that with a sack of flour and a basket of eggs. She said they were payment for Angela’s having saved her life. And no matter how Angela protested, Hannah insisted she had a debt to repay. William Sherrington thought the whole thing was funny, and he saw no reason not to accept the goods. Food was food, and the Sherringtons never had too much of

it.

~~“The gal thinks she has a debt to repay, so who are we to say no?” William had laughed. “It ain’~~
as if we was takin’ charity.”

Hannah came once a month after that, always bringing something with her. First it was food, but since the war had started, she brought pins, salt, matches, and fabric. Most poor people were now doing without those things.

Everything Hannah brought she stole from the Maitland household, swearing to the good Lord that the goods would never be missed. Each month, Angela made her promise not to steal any more, but Hannah continued to break her promise every month.

Angela had a special affection for Hannah, her only woman acquaintance. It didn’t matter that the color of their skin was different. They were just two women, a young girl and a plump woman three times as old who just sat and talked.

Charissa Sherrington had run off a year after Angela was born. Her mother had tried to take her with her, but her father had found them and brought Angela back, perhaps hoping to force Charissa to return. But she hadn’t.

Angela sometimes wondered what it would have been like if her father had not found them. And she often wondered where her mother was now. Her father had raised her by himself, which accounted for her unfeminine habits.

So Angela confided to Hannah most of the girlish things she might have told a mother, things she wouldn’t dream of speaking to her father about. And one of those things was that she fancied herself in love with Bradford Maitland. But of course, that had been last year, before Hannah told her the terrible truth about Jacob Maitland’s oldest son.

“That boy, he the only one to bother you?” Hannah was asking her now.

“Billy’s the only one who’s ever come here, but he ain’t the only one who’s insulted me.”

The whites of Hannah’s eyes grew rounder. “What you mean, child?”

Angela had always been too embarrassed to mention to Hannah about the scraps she got into with boys. But after the shock today, embarrassment didn’t matter.

“I’ve been defendin’ myself for a long time now against them young jackasses who want to grab me all the time.”

“Lordy, Miss Angela!” Hannah cried. “Why ain’t you told me ’bout this sooner?”

“It only happens when I go to the city. And so far I can still take care of myself. But I ain’t gonna do no fightin’ no more. I’m gonna use this!” Angela said hotly, holding up her father’s rifle.

“Who them boys been botherin’ you?”

“Just boys I’ve known since as far back as I can remember.”

“But their names?” Hannah persisted.

Angela’s brow creased in thought. “Judd Holt and Sammy Sumpter,” she said, then added, “and the Wilcox brothers and Bobo Deleron too. Those are the ones I’ve been obliged to whip occasionally.”

Hannah shook her head. “And that one come here today? What’s his name, Missy?”

“Billy Anderson. But why’re you askin’ me about all this?” Angela questioned, her temper ebbing now.

“Just wonderin’,” Hannah said evasively. “Where’s your pa? Why weren’t he out here runnin’ that Billy Anderson off?”

“He stayed in the city last night and hasn’t been home since.”

“You mean he left you all alone?”

“Yes, but—”

“O’ Lordy!” Hannah exclaimed and hoisted herself to her feet. “I gots to go!”

“Wait, Hannah! Did you by chance bring any matches?” Angela called after her.

~~“Yessum, they’s in the basket on the porch,” Hannah replied, already hurrying back to Golden Oaks.~~

Angela shook her head. What had got into Hannah? She seemed more upset about Billy’s coming here than Angela was.

Billy Anderson tore into the gray mares with his short whip, taking his anger out on them all the way back to Mobile. He would never forgive Angela for making a fool of him. He couldn’t remember ever being this enraged before, except maybe last year when his father had locked him in his room to keep him from volunteering, and him seventeen years old then and wanting more than anything to get in on the fighting and be a hero.

This was even worse. Angela had made him look like a coward. If she so much as breathed a word about running him off at riflepoint, he’d kill her. He should have taken that rifle away from her and given her a good thrashing. Then he could have thrown her down and gotten what he came for.

In his reckless race away from the scene of his humiliation, Billy almost careened into a passing carriage. He cursed aloud, then flushed when he saw who was in the carriage. Crystal Lonsdale and Candise Taylor barely glanced at him as they went by. Seeing them brought back the morning clearly.

Now Angela was probably laughing at him, just like that Crystal. But she wouldn’t be for long. He’d have Angela yet. She’d never make a fool of him again.



Hannah went the full mile back to Golden Oaks, almost running. She didn't bother with the back entrance, but walked right through the front door and made straight for the master's study. Lord, but Master Jacob was going to raise the roof.

Hannah could hear Candise Taylor and Crystal Lonsdale playing backgammon in the drawing room. Candise and her father had been honored guests at Golden Oaks for two weeks now, but they would soon be going back to England. Crystal Lonsdale had been a regular visitor to Golden Oaks for quite a few years now, and her brother Robert even longer. Robert had joined the Alabama troops along with Zachary, Jacob's younger son, when the war first broke out. Under Braxton Bragg, they defended the coast between Pensacola and Mobile. Robert had stayed to guard Mobile Bay, but Zachary had gone with Bragg when he took command of the Army of Tennessee. Lord, protect them, Hannah thought, as she had so many times.

Hannah knocked softly on the study door and entered when Jacob Maitland bid her. She stood before the desk where Jacob was poring through the ledger, as he did every afternoon. He hadn't looked up yet to see who had come into the room, so Hannah stood patiently.

She knew Jacob was going to be upset and that was bad. He had had a mild stroke a few years before and was supposed to take it easy. He left most of his business interests to others now.

Hannah would die if anything happened to Jacob Maitland. She remembered all too well what life had been like before he came to Golden Oaks, buying the land and mansion as well as all the slaves. Those had been days of constant fear, fear of having family members sold away, fear of the whip.

Now the slaves no longer felt like slaves, and it was all Jacob Maitland's doing. Hannah knew there wasn't anything she wouldn't do for Jacob Maitland. He had given her new life, self-respect. Most important, he had given back her firstborn, her son taken from her and sold eighteen years ago, when he was four. Jacob found the boy and brought him back to Hannah.

She knew where Jacob's convictions lay, that he would have set all his people free if it weren't necessary to give the impression of conforming to southern standards in order to live here. But, in this war, he actually supported the North.

Of course, Jacob was unaware that Hannah knew all these things and more. Only she and her family knew, for her husband, Luke, was Jacob's manservant, and overheard Jacob talking in his sleep. But her family guarded those secrets. Hannah had once slipped and revealed a fact to Angela that no one was supposed to know. But Angela was a good girl. She knew the tragedies that would result if she told anyone the secret. Hannah was certain Angela wouldn't.

Jacob still hadn't looked up from his ledgers, but Hannah stood patiently, her brown eyes resting on him fondly as she waited. He was a fine-looking man of forty-eight, with only a slight shading of gray at his temples. The rest of his hair was still so black it sometimes looked blue. But his eyes! Lord, that man had scary eyes. If the devil ever came up and showed himself, Hannah was sure he would have eyes just like Jacob Maitland's. They were a light golden brown, except when he was angry. And for all his goodness, this man sure had a temper. And when that temper rose, those eyes

would change to pure gold-yellow flames, ready to burn into whomever they lit on.

~~Of Jacob Maitland's two children, only Bradford looked exactly like his father. Zachary was the same height as his older brother and his father, just an inch under six feet, but Zachary took his mother's eyes and temperament. He was certainly not as adventurous as his brother.~~

Jacob Maitland looked up now and frowned slightly. "What are you doing back so soon? She was at home, wasn't she?"

Hannah always liked to listen to Jacob Maitland talk. He had such a fine, precise way of speaking. She'd tried to copy his way of talking years ago, but her family made such fun of her that she gave it up.

"Yessuh, she's home."

"Well then, how is she? Is she still making you promise not to steal from me?" Jacob chuckled.

"I left 'fore she had a chance to," Hannah said, still squeezing her hands nervously.

"Is something wrong, Hannah?" Jacob questioned, his eyes narrowing. "Out with it."

"Maybe we should go out to the stables, Master Jacob, 'cause I gots this feelin' you's gonna be raisin' your voice, and the young ladies is back from the city and in the drawin' room. They's gonna hear you."

"Out with it!"

Hannah took a deep breath and shivered slightly, seeing those gold-brown eyes already lighting up with flame.

"Missy Angela almost got herself raped this mornin'," Hannah blurted out, her eyes wide, waiting for the storm to break.

"*She what?*" he demanded, jumping instantly to his feet. "How could that happen with her father there?"

"He weren't there."

"Was—was Angela hurt?"

"Oh, no, sir. She held that young buck off with her rifle. But he was sure wantin' her. He done threatened he'd get her yet. But she weren't scared none, only madder than a wet hen."

"What kind of boy would try to rape a child?" Jacob asked as he sat down wearily in his chair again. "I don't understand it."

"I tried to tell you she done started to grow," Hannah reminded him reproachfully.

"She's still only fourteen years old. Hell, she's still just a baby."

Hannah didn't remind him that "babies" Angela's age get married and have babies of their own. "You ain't seen her ever since you and her pa had that bad fight. The little Missy is turnin' out right pretty."

Jacob didn't seem to hear her. "What's this boy's name? By God, he's going to wish he were dead!"

"Billy Anderson."

"You mean Sam Anderson's son?" Jacob looked astonished.

"Yessuh."

"Have there been any others who have tried to bother Angela?" Jacob asked.

"Yessuh. And that worries me no end, 'cause that poor little Missy's been havin' to spend nights all by herself out there."

"Why?"

Hannah lowered her eyes and spoke in a whisper. "Her papa's been leavin' her all alone while he spends the night in Mobile. At least that's what he did last night."

"That son of a bitch!" Jacob came to his feet again, this time toppling his chair to the floor. There was a raging fire in the depth of his eyes. "Tell Zeke to take my horse and go to the city. He is to bring

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