

CARRIE TURANSKY

AUTHOR OF *NO OCEAN TOO WIDE*

MCALISTER FAMILY
BOOK 2

NO JOURNEY TOO FAR

A NOVEL

**SNEAK
PEEK**



**SAMPLE
ONLY**

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Praise for
NO JOURNEY TOO FAR

“No distance is too great for love, a truth beautifully laced into *No Journey Too Far*. Bringing to life the little-known story of British Home Children, Turansky creates a tale of love, loss, and reunion for the continuing saga of the McAlister family as they search for one another after years of separation. Readers will not want to miss this gem—heartwarming and full of grace.”

—J’NELL CIESIELSKI, author of *Beauty Among Ruins*

“Carrie has penned another stirring tale of the heart, spanning two continents and the all-too-real lives of those caught up in the challenges of the British Home Children. The issues of prejudice, privilege, and powerlessness speak as much to us today as in the past, and encourage us to seek the Maker of all, whose love shows that there is no journey too far for finding His children and bringing them home. Thank you for making this important part of history come alive to us, Carrie.”

—CAROLYN MILLER, Australian author of *Dusk’s Darkest Shores*

“Cruelly separated and spread across Canada as British Home Children, the McAlister family have never given up their determination to be reunited. Following WWI, Carrie Turansky continues their heart-wrenching search through a riveting plot and the well-drawn characters we’ve come to dearly love. *No Journey Too Far* reminds me of the extent our Lord goes to seek us out, win our hearts, and draw us safely home. A beautiful and satisfying conclusion by a wonderful author.”

—CATHY GOHLKE, Christy Award-winning author of
Night Bird Calling and *The Medallion*



“In *No Journey Too Far*, Turansky continues the stirring McAlister family saga and the journey to reunite their family, separated when three of the siblings were mistakenly sent to Canada as British Home Children. The sequel to *No Ocean Too Wide* begins ten years later, focusing on Garth McAlister’s attempt to find his youngest sister, Grace, the only sibling adopted into a Canadian family. The author skillfully depicts the terrible prejudice the British Home Children faced, yet the story is one of hope, illustrating that in the end faith and determination can overcome any obstacle. A wonderful conclusion to this moving family drama!”

—SUSAN ANNE MASON, author of the
Canadian Crossings and Redemption’s Light series

“*No Journey Too Far* is a formidable story that is genuinely touching, telling of a desperate fight to reunite a family and the extreme difficulties encountered along the way. This book touches upon the shame, abuse, and stigmatization felt by many Home Children, mixed with a loving family bond on both sides of the ocean. Carrie brings the continuing story of the McAlister family to life in a compelling way that descendants will appreciate, and all readers are sure to be moved. Heartfelt, real, and poignant.”

—LORI OSCHEFSKI, CEO of the
award-winning British Home Children Advocacy
and Research Association (BHCARA) and author of
Bleating of the Lambs: Canada’s British Home Children

“A sweet and gentle tale at heart, *No Journey Too Far* features endearing characters who live out their faith in difficult circumstances. The story also casts light on the prejudices faced by the British Home Children in Canada, even as they entered adulthood. Carrie Turansky’s writing pulls the heartstrings in all the right ways!”

—SARAH SUNDIN, bestselling and Carol Award–winning
author of *When Twilight Breaks*

“A delightful story that explores the fascinating history of the British Home Children, *No Journey Too Far* is a touching tale filled with excitement, drama, mystery, romance, and faith. Through the McAlister family, Carrie Turansky weaves the hopeful message that God does not let us go, that His grace and acceptance defy all stigmas and prejudices, and that He always keeps His promises. A beautiful novel that historical fans are sure to appreciate.”

—HEIDI CHIAVAROLI, Carol Award–winning author of
Freedom’s Ring and *The Orchard House*

BOOKS BY CARRIE TURANSKY

Novels

No Ocean Too Wide

Across the Blue

Shine Like the Dawn

A Refuge at Highland Hall

The Daughter of Highland Hall

The Governess of Highland Hall

Snowflake Sweethearts

A Man to Trust

Seeking His Love

Surrendered Hearts

Along Came Love

Novellas

Shelter in the Storm, in *A Joyful Christmas*

Waiting for His Return

Moonlight over Manhattan

A Trusting Heart, in *Mountain Christmas Brides*

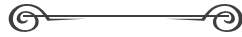
Wherever Love Takes Us, in *Where Two Hearts Meet*

Tea for Two, in *Where Two Hearts Meet*



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*To the descendants of British Home Children: may this story
highlight the courage shown by your relatives and the challenges
they overcame as they built new lives for themselves
and for future generations.*

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The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed,
a stronghold in times of trouble.
Those who know your name trust in you,
for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you.
—PSALM 9:9–10, NIV

NO JOURNEY TOO FAR

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Prologue

Belleville, Ontario, Canada
May 1909

Grace McAlister held tight to her sister Katie's hand as they slowly walked across the large open room in the Belleville Town Hall.

"It's all right, Grace. We're going to meet our new family this morning." Katie smiled down at her, but it didn't look like her real smile.

Grace swallowed hard and pushed out her words. "What if they're not nice?"

"Anyone who would take in children who are not their own must have a kind heart." Her words sounded brave, but she still looked worried.

Grace matched Katie's steps as they followed the line of girls who had come with them on the big ship from England to Canada and then on the train to Belleville. She wished she had eaten more of the porridge at breakfast that morning, but her tummy felt funny, and she'd pushed her bowl aside after a few bites. She missed Mum, Garth, and Laura. Where were they? Why didn't they come and take her and Katie home?

Grace and Katie joined the line of girls along the back wall of the room. Miss Delaney, the tall lady with red hair who had come

over on the ship with them, talked to two men and an old lady sitting at a long table in the front of the room.

Who were they? Where was her new family? Would they like her? When could she and Katie go home and see Mum?

A buzzing began in Grace's head like there was a bee inside. She squeezed her eyes tight until the buzzing finally went away. Taking a slow deep breath, she opened her eyes. Everything would be all right. Katie promised it would.

She smoothed the pinafore over her green dress. All the other girls were dressed the same, and each wore a blue jacket and straw hat like hers. Most of the girls were bigger, like Katie, who was fourteen. She looked down the row, searching for Millie, the only girl in their group younger than Grace. Millie was six, and Grace was seven. They'd played together on the ship. Would Millie find a new family too? What if no one wanted her? What if no one wanted Grace and Katie?

The buzzing in her head came back. She stepped closer to Katie and leaned against her side. Her sister's arm felt warm like when they used to sit together in the big chair at home and Katie would read her a story.

Miss Delaney crossed the room and stopped in front of Grace. She wore a plain brown dress and small hat, and her pink cheeks were covered with freckles. "All right, girls. I want you to stand up straight. Look smart and be quiet and respectful to the people who come in to see you."

Grace's tummy tightened. She peeked up at Katie. Her sister stood taller and lifted her chin like Miss Delaney.

A side door opened, and a man and lady walked in and came toward the line of girls. The man was tall and wore a black suit and hat. He looked at each girl as he and the lady moved down the line. The lady wore a dress the color of pennies. Her big hat

was the same color, with lots of flowers and feathers on top. She had a pretty face and blue eyes. As the lady came closer, Grace could see she had brown hair under her hat.

The man and lady stopped in front of them. The lady looked down at Grace for a few seconds and smiled. She turned to the man. He nodded and then took the lady's arm and they moved down the row.

"They didn't like us?" Grace's voice felt tight and shaky.

Katie put her arm around Grace. "Don't worry. I'm sure there are more families coming in soon."

Grace fiddled with the edge of her pinafore and counted the boards on the floor around her. She thought about Mum and the times they used to go to the park near their flat over the dress shop. Grace liked feeding the ducks and chasing Garth and Katie across the grass. Mum would smile as she watched them from the bench in the shade of the big tree by the pond. Grace wished they could all go to the park again.

"I'd like you to come with me, Grace."

Grace sucked in a breath and looked up. Miss Delaney stood in front of her.

Katie gripped Grace's hand. "Why? Where are you taking her?" Her voice sounded high and scared.

Miss Delaney motioned toward the front of the room where the man and lady stood. "That couple would like to talk to her."

Katie pressed her lips together for a second, then nodded. "Go ahead, Grace." Katie let go of Grace's hand. "Just be sure to tell them I'm your sister and we have to stay together."

Before Grace could answer, Miss Delaney took her hand and tugged her across the room. Her face felt hot, and she could feel her heart beating hard. Why couldn't Katie come with her to talk to the man and lady? What did they want to say to her?

"This is Grace." Miss Delaney gave her a little push toward the man and lady. "She's seven years old."

The lady in the penny-colored dress smiled. "Hello, Grace. I'm Mrs. Hamilton, and this is Mr. Hamilton."

Grace knew she should say something, but she couldn't make her voice come out. She bit her lip and looked at the floor.

"Have you been to school yet?" The man's voice was strong and loud.

Grace kept her eyes down. If she said yes, would they ask her to count or recite? She could do that with Katie but not with people she didn't know.

The lady bent down toward her. "Can you tell us something you enjoy doing?" Her voice sounded nice, but when Grace glanced at her face, there were lines across the lady's forehead. Was she mad because Grace didn't answer?

Grace peeked over her shoulder at Katie. Her sister sent her a pleading look, but Grace wasn't sure what she was supposed to say or do.

"Mr. Hamilton and I have a dog named Cooper," the lady continued. "He's a very pretty collie. We like to take him for walks in the park or spend time with him out in our garden. Do you like dogs?"

Most of the dogs Grace had seen in London lived on the street and weren't very friendly. Her mum had always told her to stay away from them. What should she say?

"What's your favorite food?" the lady asked.

If she said Mum's meat pies, would they know what she meant? Grace shrugged.

The man frowned. "Why won't she speak to us?"

Mrs. Hamilton patted Grace's shoulder. "I'm sure this is all a

bit overwhelming.” She turned to Miss Delaney. “Do you have information about her background and family? Is she in good health?”

“She’s in excellent health. All the children are given examinations before they leave England and on arrival in Canada.” Miss Delaney opened a file and sorted through some papers. “She’s an orphan from London with no relatives who can care for her. She was born on May 16.” She closed the file and looked up at Mrs. Hamilton. “I can assure you she will have more to say once she feels comfortable. Isn’t that right, Grace?”

“Yes ma’am,” Grace whispered.

Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton looked at each other. Mr. Hamilton nodded and then turned to Miss Delaney. “Very well. We’ll take her.”

Grace gasped. They were going to take her? What about Katie? She turned and looked toward the back wall. Her sister watched her with wide eyes.

Mr. Hamilton stepped up to the table and signed a paper. Mrs. Hamilton took Grace’s hand and started toward the side door.

Grace pulled back. “Wait!”

“It’s all right, dear.” Mrs. Hamilton gripped harder and continued toward the door. “Our motorcar is just outside. Have you ever ridden in a motorcar?”

“No! No!” She screamed and tried to wriggle away.

Mrs. Hamilton held on tight. “There’s no need to make a fuss.”

Grace’s eyes burned and overflowed, and her cries turned to jerky sobs.

“That’s enough! Settle down, Grace!” Mr. Hamilton scooped her up and hurried across the room.

Grace tried to get away, but Mr. Hamilton’s strong arms pressed

her hard against his chest. She jerked her head up, searching for her sister as they passed out the door. Katie stood by the wall, a wide-eyed, fearful look on her face. Grace's heart lurched, and she screamed her sister's name. But the door slammed behind them, and she couldn't see Katie anymore.

Toronto
February 1919

Grace Hamilton shifted her weight from one foot to the other. How much longer was this going to take? They couldn't expect her to stand perfectly still on this footstool forever. She shot a look at the dressmaker, kneeling at her feet, and then at her mother. "Are we almost finished?"

Impatience flashed in her mother's eyes. She crossed the parlor toward Grace but then pressed her lips together and held her peace.

Mrs. Wilson pulled a pin from her lips. "It shouldn't be too much longer. I'm almost done pinning the hem."

Grace turned and glanced at the clock. "I'm supposed to meet Abigail Gillingham at one to work on our plans for the church charity sale supporting injured veterans."

Mother's eyebrows arched. "Abigail can wait. This final fitting is more important."

Grace twisted around. "But, Mother—"

"For goodness' sake, Grace, stand still! You're almost eighteen. You must learn to have patience and conduct yourself like a proper young lady!"

Grace froze in position, her frustration simmering just beneath the surface. Being forced to pose like a statue had worn her pa-

tience thin. But if that was what it took to be free to meet her friend and have some time away from home, then that was what she would do.

Mrs. Wilson poked the next pin into the sky-blue satin fabric and looked up at Grace. “I must say this color is a perfect match for your eyes, and it highlights your blond hair very nicely.”

Mother sent Grace a pointed look, her expectation clear. Grace swallowed her frustration and gave the expected response. “Thank you, Mrs. Wilson.”

Her mother nodded, seeming satisfied. “Grace will be wearing this gown when she makes her debut at the St. Andrew’s Ball in April.”

Mrs. Wilson turned toward Mother. “I didn’t realize she was coming out this spring.”

“We had planned to bring her out next year, but now that the war is over and the soldiers are coming home, her father and I have decided it’s best not to wait.”

Grace lifted her eyes to the ceiling. All this fuss and bother about making her debut and finding a husband. She wouldn’t turn eighteen until mid-May. Why were they in such a rush?

Mrs. Wilson added another pin. “I’m thankful the war is finally behind us. But what a terrible cost our men had to pay for the victory.”

The dressmaker’s words sent a pang through Grace’s heart. Here she was frustrated about this dress fitting when so many brave men were still recovering from injuries they had suffered in the Great War. How courageous and noble they were to serve their king and country. And some would never come home, including her cousin Rodney, who had died at Passchendaele.

Her eyes grew misty as she thought of how she and Rodney had laughed and played together when they were younger. He might

not be her cousin by blood, but they'd shared a close friendship ever since she'd joined the Hamilton family. Now he was lost to her forever.

Mother stepped forward and touched Grace's back. "Stand up tall. No man wants a wife who slouches."

Grace straightened her shoulders and tried to ignore her mother's stinging words, but it wasn't easy. No matter how perfectly she tried to follow every rule of etiquette, she couldn't seem to please her mother.

"With so few men of marriageable age left, the most promising prospects will be snatched up this spring." Her mother fingered the satin fabric of Grace's skirt. "That's why Grace must make the best impression possible at the ball. We don't want her to miss the opportunity to find a suitable husband."

Mrs. Wilson looked up at Grace. "With her natural beauty and this lovely gown, there's no doubt she'll attract a long line of suitors."

Was that true? Grace shifted her feet and looked away. The idea of dressing up and attending balls had sounded exciting and romantic when they'd first discussed moving up her debut. But now that the time was near, she wasn't so sure.

How would she know which young men she ought to encourage? What were the most important qualities she should look for in a potential husband? And when someone did pursue her, how would she know if he truly loved her or if he was more interested in her family's wealth and position in society?

Her mother focused on choosing the right gown and making the most influential social connections. Surely there were other things that were more important.

She pushed that thought away. Her parents had provided every advantage for her, including the best education a governess could

offer, as well as years of piano, voice, and dance lessons. She should feel grateful and confident about the future, but somehow she couldn't help feeling unsettled, like something wasn't quite right about her life.

Faded memories of her early years in England and her family there drifted through her mind. Her father had died when she was five, and she wasn't sure what had happened to her mum. She could barely recall her parents' faces now, and that thought pierced her heart. Why had she been sent to Canada? Weren't there any relatives in England who could have taken care of her and her siblings?

She was the youngest of four, she remembered that much. Her brother, Garth, and sister Katie were twins seven years older than Grace. They would be in their midtwenties now. Were they still living in Canada, adopted into families as she had been, or had they finished their indentured contracts and struck out on their own?

And what had happened to their oldest sister, Laura? Was she still working as a lady's maid on a large estate in England, or was she married and caring for her own family now?

Her throat tightened as she recalled other memories of her brother and sisters. They had been so close when they were young. She thought they had shared a bond that would never be broken. Yet they had been separated soon after they came to Canada, and none of them had ever written to her or visited her.

She blew out a breath to release the painful ache in her chest. It wasn't right. They were older. They should've searched for her and made sure she was safe and well cared for, but they hadn't. She'd been taken in by strangers and expected to accept them as her new mother and father.

Her parents said they knew nothing about her birth family and

had forbidden her to tell anyone she was adopted. Most people didn't approve of taking in a Home Child with an unknown background.

She lifted her chin, and a wave of determination coursed through her. She might be a British Home Child, but she was not ashamed of that fact, or of her birth family, no matter what her adoptive parents said.

If she could find her siblings and discover the truth about her family and life in England, maybe she could make peace with her past. That seemed the only way she could live an open and honest life rather than feeling she must hide her history from everyone she met. But would connecting with them finally fill the aching void in her heart?

"Turn, please." The dressmaker looked up at her.

Grace blinked and shifted her gaze to Mrs. Wilson.

"Really, Grace, you must put aside your daydreaming! Soon you'll become a wife and then a mother, though I can hardly imagine my little girl is all grown up." Her mother's eyes filled, but she sniffed and looked away.

Grace sighed softly. Her mother was often sentimental and dramatic, praising her one minute and criticizing her the next.

Footsteps sounded in the front hall, and her father strode into the parlor. Tall and glowing with good health and confidence, he was dressed in a fine charcoal suit and carried his black leather briefcase. Threads of silver glistened in the black hair at his temples and in his full beard and mustache.

His assistant, Richard Findley, followed him through the doorway dressed in an equally fine fashion.

"Ah, Judith, here you are." Father greeted Mother with a brief smile, then looked across the room at Grace. His eyebrows dipped into a slight frown. "It looks as though we're interrupting."

"It's all right." Mother glanced at Grace before she turned to the dressmaker. "Mrs. Wilson is just pinning the hem."

Mrs. Wilson rose. "Yes, the dress is finished. I was just checking to make sure the hem is the proper length."

Richard flashed a confident smile at Grace. "You certainly look lovely this afternoon, Miss Hamilton."

Her cheeks warmed as she stepped down from the stool and returned his smile. "Thank you."

Richard was ten years her senior and worked as her father's assistant manager at Hamilton's, the second-largest department store in Toronto. He was a handsome man with reddish-brown hair and deep-set brown eyes. Lately, he seemed to take more notice of Grace, paying her compliments and sending her teasing smiles whenever he visited their home.

"Is that dress from our store?" Her father's serious tone and frown made his suspicions clear.

Her mother moved next to Grace. "No, it's one of Mrs. Wilson's designs."

Father's frown deepened. "We have the entire contents of our store at your disposal and you bring in a private dressmaker?"

Mrs. Wilson's face reddened. She turned away and began putting her supplies in her sewing basket.

"Howard, can we discuss this later?" Her mother's uneasy gaze darted from the dressmaker to Grace's father.

He huffed. "Very well."

Mother thanked Mrs. Wilson and turned to Grace. "Please go upstairs and change. Mrs. Wilson will want to take the gown with her."

Grace nodded and followed the dressmaker toward the parlor door.

Richard smiled again as she passed. She averted her eyes but

couldn't suppress her smile. When she reached the door, she looked over her shoulder, and Richard's gaze followed her. Their eyes met, and he winked.

She pulled in a sharp breath and hurried through the doorway. What did he mean by that wink? Was he flirting with her, or was he simply in a lighthearted mood?

Would Richard attend the St. Andrew's Ball? If he did, would he ask her to dance? Her father said he was intelligent and hard-working. Surely, those were two important qualities to recommend him as a potential beau. She didn't know anything about his family, but the fact he had been given such an important position at Hamilton's seemed to indicate that her father trusted and respected him.

A sudden thought struck, and her steps slowed. Would Richard still send her those teasing smiles if he knew the truth about her past? How could she step out into society and keep her background a secret? Building a secure future on the shifting sand of lies and secrets would be difficult, if not impossible.

And even if she could, was that the kind of life she wanted?

A few minutes later, Grace slipped out of her gown, and Mrs. Wilson helped her into her day dress.

"It will still be chilly in April," the dressmaker said as she tied the sash at the back of Grace's dress. "Would you like me to design a cape to go with your new gown?"

Father's disapproving expression flashed across Grace's mind. "No, thank you. Mother has a blue-and-silver shawl that will match the gown."

"Very good, miss. I'll finish the hem and send the gown to you as soon as it's done." Mrs. Wilson placed the gown in a large cloth bag and draped it over her arm.

Grace thanked her and followed her into the upper hallway. As

the dressmaker descended the stairs, Grace looked over the railing to the entry hall below.

Richard followed the butler to the front door, accepted his hat and coat, and walked out.

Grace released a soft sigh. She'd missed her chance to speak to him. It didn't matter. She wasn't sure what she would say if he had lingered, waiting for her.

Mrs. Wilson followed Richard out, and as soon as the front door closed, Grace's father's voice rang out from the parlor. "Honestly, Judith, do you think I am made of money?"

Grace bit her lip, but she leaned forward to hear more of her parents' conversation.

"Howard, please. There is no need to raise your voice."

"It seems that is the only way I can convince you to listen."

"I don't understand why you're so upset. We can certainly afford a new gown for Grace."

"But I own a store full of dresses. You could choose any one you want. Why on earth do you insist on calling in a private dressmaker?"

"If Grace is going to make the right impression at the St. Andrew's Ball, then she must have a unique gown—one that sets her apart from all the other young women. We can't simply choose a gown off the rack at Hamilton's."

Her father grumbled something Grace couldn't hear.

"We must dress Grace like a princess to make sure no one suspects her background."

Grace stifled a gasp. Was that why Mother brought in the dressmaker? She feared someone would guess she wasn't a native-born Canadian?

"No one suspects Grace was a Home Child."

“They might if we don’t make sure she looks like she was born into our family.”

“I don’t know why I ever let you talk me into this scheme,” her father growled. “We should never have hidden the fact that Grace was adopted.”

“How can you say that? She’d be an outcast from society if the truth were known. Then she’d never find a suitable husband.”

Grace clutched the railing as pain pierced her heart. How could her mother say such a thing? Surely, that wasn’t true, was it?

Her father continued, “Grace is an attractive and accomplished young woman, and we are a respected family. That should be enough to impress any young man.”

“Not in Toronto society. If we are going to secure Grace’s future and protect our reputation, then no one must ever know the truth.”

A few seconds ticked by before he answered. “That’s a foolish choice, Judith, and one I’m sure we’ll come to regret.” The parlor door slammed, and he strode across the entry hall toward the library.

Grace pulled back into the shadows and held her breath. When her father’s footsteps faded, she peered over the railing. The entry hall was empty.

Was her mother right? Did her past make her unworthy of love?

If only her father’s opinion were true and she could be accepted into society based on her character and accomplishments rather than pretending she had been born into a wealthy, upper-class family.

But her mother’s fearful words struck her heart again. If the truth became known, she would be an outcast. She had no choice.

She would have to continue the charade and make sure no one, including her future husband, ever suspected she had come to Canada as a British Home Child.

Ten minutes later, desperate to distract herself from the memory of her parents' heated conversation and the turmoil in her heart, she set off down the upper hallway in search of their maid. She found her putting away clothing in her mother's dressing room. "Hello, Sylvia."

The maid nodded to her. "Good day, miss. Can I help you?"

"Yes, I'm looking for my mother's blue-and-silver shawl, the one with the silver fringe."

The maid's brow creased. "Mrs. Hamilton told me to put it in storage in the attic with a few other items. Would you like me to fetch it for you?"

"No, that's all right. I'll get it. Thank you, Sylvia."

"Of course, miss."

After returning to the hallway, Grace climbed the stairs to the top floor and slipped into the attic storage room. Dust motes floated in the shafts of sunlight streaming through the only window, but the room was still cold. Grace shivered and rubbed her arms. She'd have to make this a quick search.

Extra furniture and stacks of boxes filled most of the space beneath the exposed rafters. Two old wardrobes stood against one wall with several trunks and boxes stacked around them. The family stored out-of-season clothing in those wardrobes, and she hoped to find the shawl in one of them. She crossed the room and opened the first wardrobe. It held her father's suits and overcoats. She opened the second wardrobe and looked through the row of her mother's dresses, including a few that she'd outgrown, but found no shawls.

Grace lifted the lid of the closest trunk and found that it con-

tained neatly folded blankets. She lowered the lid and searched three more trunks. No shawl.

With a sigh, she stood, looking across the attic. It had to be here somewhere. In the corner, a blanket was draped over what seemed to be a smaller square trunk. Two other boxes were stacked on top. She set the boxes aside and pulled off the blanket. Underneath was a simple wooden trunk with words stenciled across the top in black paint.

Grace scanned the writing and pulled in a sharp breath. She blinked and read the words again: *Grace McAlister, Care of the Matron, Pleasantview Children's Home, Belleville, Ontario, Canada.*

This was *her* trunk, the one she'd brought from England!

Her fingers trembled as she lifted the lid and peered inside. Several child-sized dresses, aprons, petticoats, and stockings were folded in neat piles. A packing list was attached to the inside of the lid. She quickly read the items listed, and memories came rushing back.

Her sister Katie had helped her pack this trunk before they sailed to Canada. She carefully pushed the clothing aside and looked deeper inside. She spotted a small black Bible in the bottom corner and carefully lifted it out.

She had just been learning to read when she'd taken that voyage across the Atlantic, but Katie had told her she must take good care of the Bible and read it often. The bittersweet memory brought tears to her eyes. She blinked them away and smoothed her hand over the cover.

Her parents had a large leather-bound family Bible downstairs in the parlor, but she couldn't remember them ever opening it. She didn't have a Bible of her own, or at least she'd forgotten she had one until now.

Her throat tightened as she remembered how Katie had held the Bible and told her to treasure it. Closing her eyes, Grace lifted it to her lips and kissed the cover. This Bible was a connection to her family in England. She would take it to her room, start reading it tonight, and keep her promise to her sister.

She lowered the trunk's lid and studied the writing on top: *Grace McAlister*. Like a surging wave, images from her life in London flooded her mind. The butcher, the dressmaker, and the reverend at church had all called her mum Mrs. Edna McAlister. The memory was as clear as day now.

They'd lived in a small flat above a dress shop where her mum worked as a dressmaker's assistant doing hand sewing until she fell ill. Grace could picture the table where they ate their simple meals and the bed she'd shared with her sister Katie.

She stared at the words stenciled on the trunk once more, trying to recall the Pleasantview Children's Home in Belleville, but the three children's homes where she'd stayed all blurred together.

An idea struck, and she laid her hand on top of the trunk. Now that she knew the name of the children's home in Belleville, she could write to the matron and ask for information about her birth family.

Joy tingled through her, and her smile spread wide. Perhaps the matron would write back and tell her how she could find Garth and Katie, and through them, she might learn how to contact Laura in England. At last she might be able to find out if Mum was still living.

But her joy quickly faded as new questions stirred her heart. Why had her adopted parents told her they knew nothing about her family or the circumstances that brought her to Canada? Surely, they remembered that her trunk was stored in the attic

with this information stenciled across the top. Had they purposely kept it from her so she wouldn't ask questions? What would they think about her delving into her history and searching for her family?

Grace straightened and turned toward the window as one thought connected to the next. She had a right to know about her background, even if her adoptive parents wouldn't approve. She would write the Pleasantview Children's Home and ask how to contact Garth and Katie.

Finding the trunk and learning the name of the children's home she'd passed through was thrilling, but there was so much more she wanted to know, so many questions that needed to be answered. Most of all, she longed to see Katie and Garth again. Maybe then she'd finally feel the heart-to-heart connection she'd been missing for so many years.



That evening, after dinner, Grace crept down the back servants' stairs and peeked into the kitchen. The maid stood at the sink, washing the last of the pots and pans that had been used to prepare the family's dinner.

Grace scanned the room to make sure they were alone, then cleared her throat. "Good evening, Sylvia."

The maid spun around, her eyes wide and her hands dripping dishwater. "Oh, Miss Hamilton! Can I help you?" She quickly wiped her hands on her apron.

Grace smiled. "I wanted to ask if you might do an errand for me tomorrow."

Sylvia's golden-brown eyebrows rose. "You want *me* to do an errand for you?"

“Yes, if you don’t mind.” It was an unusual request to make of the maid, but Grace needed help and there were few members of the staff she could trust.

“What would you like me to do, miss?”

Grace took the letter she’d addressed to the Pleasantview Children’s Home from behind her back. “I’d like you to mail this letter for me.”

Confusion filled the maid’s eyes. “Why don’t you give it to Mr. Harding?”

The butler usually handled all the family’s mail, but he was loyal to her father and she couldn’t risk him seeing the address and reporting it to her parents.

“I’d rather you take it to the post office.”

Sylvia blinked, looking uncertain.

Grace wished she could go herself, but her parents rarely allowed her to leave the house without a chaperone. “It’s a private letter. I’d rather Mr. Harding didn’t see it.”

Sylvia slowly nodded. “All right, miss. I’ll post the letter for you.”

Relief rushed through Grace. “Thank you.” She took two coins from her pocket and held them out with the letter. “This should be enough to pay for the stamp, and a bit extra for your trouble.”

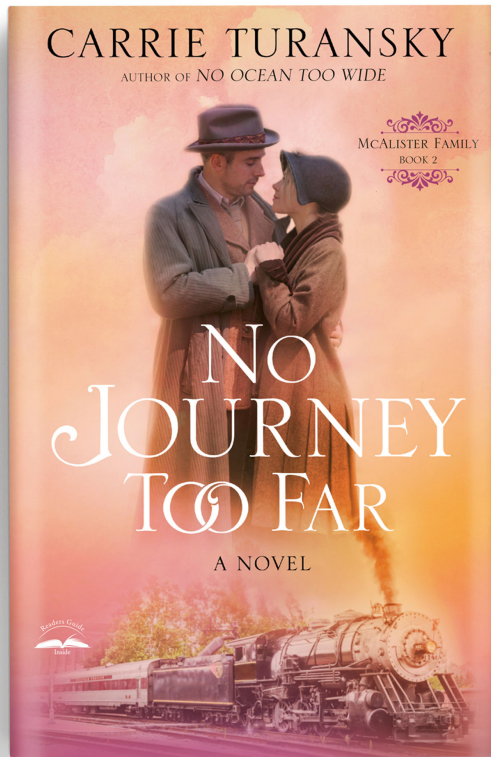
The maid’s eyes widened again. “Oh, thank you, miss. That’s more than enough.” Sylvia accepted the envelope and tucked it into her apron pocket along with the coins.

“Thank you, Sylvia. I appreciate your help.”

The maid dipped a slight curtsy. “Of course, miss. You can count on me. I’ll keep your secret.”

A smile rose from Grace’s heart as she walked out of the kitchen. She’d just taken the first step to reconnect with her family, and it

made her feel so light and hopeful, she could almost dance up the stairs. Perhaps in a few weeks she'd be able to write to Garth and Katie and then make plans to see them. At last she'd find the answers to her questions and know what it felt like to be part of a real family.



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