

Love's Kindling kept me engaged from page one. Set amid the Revolutionary War during an ugly time when the British burned villages and killed the innocent, the love story between Zadok and Aurinda struggles along with the fight for America's freedom. Elaine Cooper has mastered placing her readers into the setting. Her research of this area of Connecticut and the towns that were ravaged are captured by her pen in the scenes of Love's Kindling.

— AUTHOR CINDY HUFF

I just loved the redemptive storyline. So many beautiful parts to this story. The theme of forgiveness and overcoming bitterness is such a needed one right now.

Wonderful history, and so well researched. Well done!

— KATHLEEN L. MAHER, ACFW GENESIS AWARD
WINNER 2012

Elaine Cooper has given us another well-researched Revolutionary War story, this time set in 1779 Connecticut. It is filled with engaging characters, war action, broken relationships, and budding romance.

Zadok Wooding and Aurinda Whitney are not only plagued by the war around them, but they also battle emotional and physical challenges which threaten their growing attraction. The issues many of the characters face are not relegated to the eighteenth century, they're timeless. There are faith lessons readers will remember long after the story ends.

— JANET GRUNST, AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR OF *SETTING TWO HEARTS FREE*

A well-written tale of love overcoming obstacles. Despite the terrors of war, an overall sense of hopefulness carries the story through darkness into light. Each of the main characters, as well as the secondary ones, grow with experiences many of us could never imagine, and yet their situations and reactions are relevant even to modern times.

— TAMMY DOHERTY, AUTHOR OF *CELTIC CROSS*

*Dedicated to the memory of my dad, Gordon Mueller.
Heroes during wartime are found in many callings.*

DAWN OF AMERICA—BOOK ONE

LOVE'S KINDLING

*INCLUDES THE NOVELLA WAR'S RESPITE,
(PREQUEL TO THE SERIES)*



*AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR
ELAINE MARIE COOPER*



Scrivenings
PRESS

Quench your thirst for story.

www.ScriveningsPress.com

Copyright © 2021 by Elaine Marie Cooper

Published by Scrivenings Press LLC
15 Lucky Lane
Morrilton, Arkansas 72110
<https://ScriveningsPress.com>

Printed in the United States of America

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—for example, electronic, photocopy and recording— without the prior written permission of the publisher. The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews.

Paperback ISBN 978-1-64917-098-9

eBook ISBN 978-1-64917-099-6

Library of Congress Control Number: 2021936285

Cover by Linda Fulkerson, bookmarketinggraphics.com

All characters are fictional, and any resemblance to real people, either fictional or historical, is purely coincidental.

All scriptures are taken from the KING JAMES VERSION (KJV): KING JAMES VERSION, public domain.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am so grateful to a gentleman named Charles Hervey Townsend, Esq. who, in 1879, took considerable time to document his recollections of stories he heard as a boy. In his own words, “it was with the greatest delight that he [the author] listened to the traditional account of the invasion and evacuation of New Haven [Connecticut] by British troops, July 1779, as related by old citizens. And as he grew older, he began to note down their stories, and subsequently to verify them.”

Townsend amassed hundreds of pages that documented not just the 1779 attack on New Haven, but also the subsequent attacks on Fairfield and Norwalk as well. Many details of the battles and destruction that ensued would have been lost to history if soldiers of old had not shared their stories with him. His documentation became the backdrop for the fictional story of *Love’s Kindling*.

I also want to thank, my husband, Steve, who patiently edited my first draft of *Love’s Kindling*.

Thank you also to Alycia Morales (editor), and Shannon Vannatter and Linda Fulkerson, editors and publishers at Scrivenings Press.

Thank you to all my readers in the U.S. and beyond, who have supported my books through the years and encouraged my pen to keep writing. You are a gift to me.

And thanks, as always, to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, from whom all blessings flow.

WAR'S RESPITE

PREQUEL—DAWN OF AMERICA SERIES



New Haven, Colony of Connecticut, 1763

Jonas Wooding wiped the sweat and ash off his forehead, grateful for the November breeze. The fire over the forge seemed more tolerable in this arrival of fall weather. He longed for a reprieve from the summer's heat, since it had lingered far longer than his body could tolerate. Mostly, relief permeated his spirit because the war with the French was over. France had finally surrendered.

For seven long years, the king's army had battled. Darkness seemed to still hover over New Haven as those years cast shadows of loss on loved ones left behind. Some wives still wondered if their consort was a casualty. Reports of children crying themselves to sleep, missing their daddas, filtered through communities. Or worse yet, children forgetting who their fathers were altogether.

From the recent news that traveled back to town, Jonas cringed, thinking of so many who would never return. He banged the horseshoe with such a firm force, he flattened the iron too far. Swallowing back a curse, he plunged the sizzling

piece into the slack tub and tossed it aside, throwing his hammer down on the anvil. He'd take a break before the ache in his head threatened to worsen.

Jonas had never joined the militia. Instead, he'd stayed home to raise his family and shoe the horses of the community. He often regretted not joining the fight, but he had two sons and a daughter to raise, not to mention the child on the way. Who would teach his sons to be men, perhaps needing to fight someday? Peter was only eight and Zadok, six. Who would educate them to make horseshoes for the mounts, equipping them to support families of their own?

As he stared off toward Long Island Sound, the front door of their home closed. Without turning around, he smiled. Esther approached. Her soft steps, made more awkward in these latter days of her confinement, were as familiar to him as her tender kisses on his cheek. In less than a moment, he felt her cherished lips.

"Husband, you must take a rest. Drink this new cider to refresh you. You've been hammering all afternoon."

"Thank you." He guzzled a long drink then wiped his mouth on his shirtsleeve.

Giggling, she picked up the edge of her apron and wiped the same spot she'd kissed. Soot smeared the white fabric. She suddenly grabbed at her large belly and inhaled.

His heart galloped at her gasp. "Is it time?"

"Nay. Just a good kick from this wee one. Though not so 'wee' anymore."

He sighed in relief and took her hand. "You must rest awhile. You work too hard." He searched the farmyard. "Where are the boys? They must help you."

"They've been playing with friends. Do not fret, Jonas. They have done their chores and need time to play." Esther frowned and stared into the distance. "Is that Abijah Whitney? And who might that be with him?"

Jonas spun around and stared at the veterans in their tattered regimentals as they walked their horses down the street, past the smithy toward the Allan house. Primrose Allan had lived there with her sister, Eliza, until she gave birth to a baby girl, five years before.

The child survived, even thrived, but Eliza Whitney had died during the birthing. Primrose had mothered her golden-haired niece, a treasured friend of his son, Zadok. Would Abijah allow the lass to stay with her aunt?

Esther gripped his arm. "Jonas ..."

"'Tis not our concern, Esther." He placed his soot-covered hand around her. "I know what you're thinking, but the child is his."

"But Jonas ..."

"Be silent, wife. All we can do is pray the man will see reason and do what is best for the child. Besides, he may stay here in New Haven." He attempted a smile—a weak endeavor. War could embitter a man's heart. He'd seen it with his older brother, and he'd never forget the sullen, hardened man who'd come home, only to drink himself into an early grave.

What might the war have done to Abijah Whitney? When he rode by, his stern face did not bode well for the future of Primrose Allan and the child.

Jonas bent down and kissed his wife. "Please, go sit by the hearth."

"Very well." Her voice quivered, but she turned and went indoors. He inhaled deeply and resumed his work at the forge, pumping the bellows with determination to refresh the flame.



TENSION STARTED in Abijah Whitney's shoulders then stretched clear down to his hands, which gripped the leather reins. Shifting in his saddle, he nearly moaned when his back seized.

After such a long journey astride his mount, pain had become his constant companion. But physical discomfort was mild compared to the anguish of returning to the town he'd left Eliza in.

Six years ago, with his wife barely pregnant with their first child, he'd clung to her and resisted letting go. Had some sense that would be their last embrace filtered through to his heart? Perhaps deep within he'd known, and now he regretted ever leaving her to face her childbirth with him hundreds of miles away. Although her younger sister, Primrose, had watched out for her, she was not a midwife. Nor had she ever birthed a child. What a fool he'd been.

The letter scrawled in Primrose's hand after Eliza died bearing his daughter had fallen into the muddy waters of the militia camp. He left it in the muck and mire, never to retrieve the parchment that bore the message which made him doubt the existence of God. Why would a good God allow his precious woman to die in agony? His heart would not be consoled, so he took out his anger and vengeance on the enemy soldiers.

"Abijah. I say, did you hear me?" The voice of his friend, Isaac, permeated the dark thoughts haunting him.

"Nay, Isaac. I beg your forgiveness. Of what did you speak?"

"I asked you what your plans are. For the child."

"Plans? Why, she is my daughter. She will come with me."

Isaac sighed. "The child is how old?"

"She must be five. Or six. I cannot remember." He removed his tricorne hat and swiped his filthy uniform sleeve across his forehead. "Why?"

"Why? Do you think it might perhaps be difficult for the lass if you take her away? Are you planning on marrying the sister, so she can still take care of her?"

Abijah scoffed. "Marry Primrose? Have you lost your senses? She and I ne'er got along. She and Eliza were nothing alike.

Nothing at all." Saying his wife's name out loud elicited tears, but he sniffed sharply to hide them.

Isaac grew silent, then inhaled a deep breath. "Do you consider me your loyal friend?"

The question took him by surprise. "Well, I saved your skinny hide from those Indians and French frogs more than once. Does na' that qualify me as a faithful friend to you? Might I assume that means you're loyal in return?"

Isaac pulled up on the reins and stopped.

Pausing, Abijah scratched his forehead.

"Then hear me out, friend. You must think this through. About the child. What is her name?"

Abijah stared into the distance toward the church spire. "I do na' know."

"You ... you're willing to take a young child from the only mother she's ever known and raise her up ... and you never even learned her name?" Isaac stared at him with mouth open. The man, rarely speechless, seemed to have suddenly lost his tongue.

An inner furor seeped into Abijah's veins. His face burned, and his enraged heart wanted to lash out at all the injustices he'd witnessed in the last six years. "How dare you question me claiming my own flesh and blood? She's all I have left of what was mine. You think I'd be willing to leave my child with a sharp-tongued woman who has no right to her?" The words spit from Abijah's mouth.

"Abijah, please understand my meaning ..."

"I understand it quite well, friend. You've no one to come home to, so you want to deprive me of the one solace left in my life. Well, you can take yer ideas and spit them on the ground. The child is mine, and with me shall she go." He jerked the reins and cantered faster toward the house.

He remembered the way, the map to her door inscribed in his heart. This was where he'd bid Eliza a final farewell. His

anger melded into anguish when he drew closer. For there in front of the wooden framed house appeared the younger image of his beloved wife. The golden ringlets he'd caressed every day for the year they'd been married were carried down onto the small head of the child. The girl's laughter filled the air with music.

The lass played with a young boy about her age who kept trying to put a fistful of dandelions into her hair. She ran away from his dirt-covered hands, taunting his efforts with the spunk and sass Abijah remembered from her mother. He stopped his horse and stared at the scene.

The door to the house opened and Eliza's sister, Primrose, came out. She twisted a piece of cloth in her hands.

"So, ye've returned, have ye?" Her caustic tone could sear clear through a less-determined man.

"Aye."

The child turned to look at him with a quizzical expression.

"Aunt Primrose?" The question of his identity burned unspoken on the child's face.

"I'm your dadda, lass."

She tilted her head. "My dadda, was killed in the war."

"Nay, lass, I am here."

She ran to Primrose, threw her arms around the aunt's waist, and buried her face in her apron. Eliza's sister clung to the child with a fierce grip.

"Forgive my friend." Isaac cleared his throat. "He is quite beside himself at seeing his daughter for the first time. I am Doctor Isaac Northrup, camp surgeon for the militia."

"Won't ye both come in for tea?" Primrose's voice trembled. "Come, Aurinda." She guided the child into the house.

"Go gently, Abijah. This could be quite difficult and painful for all of you." Isaac kept his voice low.

Abijah did not answer as he dismounted and tied the horse's

reins to the porch rail. He stared at his daughter's friend, who hadn't spoken a word since his arrival.

"And who be you, lad?"

"I'm Zadok. Aurinda is my friend. Will you move into this house now?"

"Nay, lad. I have land in Fairfield."

Tears welled in the boy. "But ... Aurinda lives here. You will not take her away, will you?"

Abijah wanted to lecture the boy about respecting his elders. Instead, he said, "Go home, lad."

The child ran off.

When they crossed the portal into the house, he could sense Isaac's eyes boring into his back.

This would not be an easy task. But it would go as he planned. He had not put his life on the line for king and country all these years to abandon the one hope that had sustained him through the darkness—claiming the daughter he'd never seen. Even if it were by force.