

A heartfelt and poignant tale of faith and perseverance with authentic details sure to resonate with historical fiction fans, this tale of grace and forgiveness is both tender and endearing.

— STEPHENIA H. MCGEE — BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF
THE IRONWOOD SERIES

In *Beyond These War-Torn Lands*, Cynthia Roemer has spun an intriguing tale of sacrifice, heartache and forgiveness. Drew and Caroline's story will sweep you into the heart of the Civil War and leave you spellbound with wonder as historical figures come to life. A transforming story of love and redemption.

— TARA JOHNSON, AUTHOR OF *ENGRAVED ON THE HEART*, *WHERE DANDELIONS BLOOM*, AND *ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT*.

Beyond These War-Torn Lands is a touching romance filled with rich historical details and a timely message of hope and reconciliation that is relevant for today.

— KELLY GOSHORN, AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR OF *A LOVE RESTORED*.

*To my Dad who was everything my heroine's father is not.
Gone from this life, but ever in my heart.*

BEYOND THESE
War-Torn
LANDS

Wounded Hearts • Book One

Award-winning Author
CYNTHIA ROEMER



Scrivenings
PRESS

Quench your thirst for story.

www.ScriveningsPress.com

©2021 Cynthia Roemer

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 quotation in printed reviews.

Paperback ISBN 978-1-64917-141-2

eBook ISBN 978-1-64917-142-9

Library of Congress Control Number: 2021942083

Editors: Erin R. Howard and Kaci Banks

Cover by Linda Fulkerson, www.bookmarketinggraphics.com

Beyond These War-Torn Lands is a work of fiction. Where real people, events, establishments, organizations, or locales appear, they are used fictitiously. All other elements of the novel are drawn from the author's imagination.

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

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This is now my fourth novel in print. When I consider that, I am overwhelmed with gratitude for all those who have made such a dream-come-true possible. Without the Lord's abundant love and guiding hand, none of this would have been possible. May His name be praised, and may each word I write bring glory to Him.

I'm so grateful to the staff of Scrivenings Press for believing in my stories. Thanks to Publisher, Linda Fulkerson, for her tireless efforts to aid, encourage, guide, and promote my work as well as the numerous other authors she's taken under her wing. Thanks to Content Editor and Virtual Assistant, Elena Hill, who is ever the encourager and diligent to keep things running smoothly behind the scenes. Your spunk and sense of humor keep us smiling! Thanks to editorial and support staff, Shannon Vannetter, Erin Howard, Kaci Banks, and Whitney Bynum, for all their help and assistance. They truly do treat us like family. God bless you all for your commitment to excellence in writing and caring for us as individuals.

I can't say enough about my sweet friends and beta-readers Savanna Kaiser and Cara Grandle. Through thick and thin, you have been there for me. You are both such an encouragement to

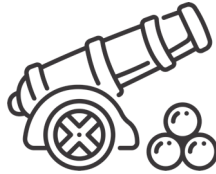
me as my friends and writing pals. The Lord truly blessed me when He allowed our paths to cross at ACFW all those years ago.

What a huge blessing it was to partner with my dear friend and fellow historical romance author, Kelly Goshorn. I feel I gained a sister when we joined forces to spur each other on in our writing endeavors. You have been such an incredible critique partner for this project and I look forward to sharing in more ventures in years to come.

I'm ever grateful to my husband, Marvin, for enduring my endless hours of research and writing at the computer. Thanks for your understanding and for sticking by me even though writing is so not your thing. Thanks for your patience and enduring love through every project and deadline. I love you!

Lastly, thanks to my parents for buying my first computer, believing in my writing from the start, and backing me each step of the way. God bless you for encouraging this girl of yours to follow her dream!

*“You have heard that it was said,
Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’
But I tell you, Love your enemies
and pray for those who persecute you
that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.”
(Matthew 5:43-44)*



July 9, 1864,

Battle of Monocacy Junction, Maryland

Sergeant Andrew Gallagher drew his bloodied bayonet from yet another gray-clad soldier. All around, the roar of gunfire mingled with the moans of the wounded and dying. The humid air reeked of flesh and gunpowder. Waves of Confederate soldiers continued to pummel him and his men from every side like a swarm of gnats. There was no time to think, only react.

He wheeled around just as another Rebel soldier charged him from behind, rifle and bayonet pointed at his midsection. With a sharp, upward cut of his rifle, Drew tore the weapon from the youth's hands, and it spiraled through the air, breaking as it landed. The young soldier's face blanched, fear mingling with contempt in his eyes.

The defenseless lad gave a shrill cry and leaped at Drew, clawing at him with his bare hands. Rather than gouging him, Drew landed a hard blow to the soldier's jaw. The youth stumbled backward and fell dazed, his inexperienced attempts at warfare temporarily at an end.

Drew's mouth pulled in a sad grin. Lord willing, some mother

would have the pleasure of greeting her boy when the war was over.

A shot whizzed past his ear. He flinched and instinctively surveyed his men. They were weary and outnumbered; a good many had fallen.

He clenched his jaw. How many more lives would be lost if they persisted?

A bugle sounded in the distance, and relief washed through Drew. They'd battled nearly non-stop since daybreak, struggling to hold their ground against the Rebs along the Monocacy River. Twice he and his men had sent them scurrying, only to have them come back harder, stronger. There seemed no end to them. General Wallace must have taken note of their plight and realized it was a no-win situation. Raising his arm, Drew signaled his bugler to sound retreat.

He only hoped their efforts had not been for nothing.

As he and his fellow soldiers in blue turned from battle, another volley of shots rang out.

A hot sting seared Drew's shoulder.

Laughter sounded a few yards to his left. "Take that, you ol' blue-belly."

Ignoring the shooting pang in his arm, he fixed his gaze on the jeering Confederate soldier. The Rebel sneered as he lowered his rifle. Drew wavered, knowing he should remain with his men, but the temptation to retaliate beckoned him.

No Johnny Reb mocked him and got away with it.

Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord.

The inner prompting gave Drew pause but wasn't enough to squelch his thirst for revenge. The Confederates owned this day, this battle, but he refused to let this gloating private glory in the victory. Seeing no immediate threats, Drew charged toward him, rifle and bayonet at the ready. The soldier's face paled as he neared. With no time to reload, the man scrambled to unsheathe the bayonet he'd foolishly neglected to attach to his rifle. As Drew threw back his arm to thrust, a flash of silver whirled

toward him. Pain sliced through him as the blade lodged deep in his side. At nearly the same instant, his bayonet found its mark in the Rebel soldier's chest. With a loud shriek, the man crumpled to the ground.

A bit faint, Drew loosened his grip on his rifle and turned from the onslaught of Confederate soldiers headed toward him. A riderless horse trotted by several yards to his left. With effort, Drew pulled the knife from his side and pressed a hand to the wound as he limped over to the bay mare. Taking hold of the horse's mane, he heaved himself into the saddle and tapped heels to her flanks. The horse lunged forward as though eager to leave the chaos of battle.

In agony, Drew slumped forward, molding himself to the horse's neck.

His impulsive act had cost him dearly.

The barrage of gunfire followed him along the open field and into the nearby timber to the east. His company had scattered, no doubt having sought refuge among the trees and underbrush. Once out of range, Drew slowed his mount and ventured a first glance at his pierced side. Enough blood had oozed from the wound to leave a sizable dark splotch on his navy wool jacket. Loosening the brass buttons, he cringed at the bright red stain on his shirt. He raised it for a look, the deep gash continuing to spew blood.

At this rate, he'd likely not last long.

He hung his head. "Serves me right for not listening, Lord."

Unbuttoning his shirt, he tied the shirttails together around him in an attempt to stem the flow of blood. He swayed sideways and clasped the saddle horn to steady himself. Sweat trickled down his temples as the sweltering heat and blood loss stole his strength. No telling what would become of him if he fell into enemy hands. More than likely, he'd be imprisoned or hung—neither thought appealing.

Given his rough condition, the Lord might very well claim him first and cheat the Rebs out of having their way with him.

He closed his eyes, melting into the rhythm of the mare's steady gait.

Forgive me, Lord, for being headstrong and thoughtless. I don't deserve your mercy, but if you could see fit to bring me ... through this, I'd ... be ... obliged.

The sound of gunfire faded in the distance. He pried his eyes open. "Stay ... awake."

The trees swirled around him, and he clung tighter to the horse's neck, his breaths growing shallower. Spots marred his vision, then darkness enveloped him.

He sensed himself falling, powerless to stop it.

A TWIG SNAPPED beneath Caroline Dunbar's boot, and she froze. She clutched tighter to her satchel, the quietness almost eerie. The birds stilled as though hiding from the atrocities of war. Not a whiff of breeze stirred in the treetops. She inched forward, wondering if she'd made a mistake in coming.

A soft sigh escaped her. She'd come too far to turn back.

The fighting had sounded so close this time. So near, in fact, their neighbors to the west must have seen the thick of battle. At Caroline's pleading, Mama consented to let her lend help where needed. Long after the guns had ceased, she'd ventured toward the timber that separated their estate from the Thomas Farm. Beyond the trees lay Bush Creek and, further to the west, the Monocacy River.

Somewhere in between, the battle had raged.

No doubt the wounded would be many.

A foreboding plume of dark smoke swirled in the direction of the Thomas farm. Had they suffered harm? Who would have guessed this once-tranquil countryside would become a maelstrom of military tensions?

The afternoon shadows were deepening. If Papa knew she'd strayed into the timber so near the battlegrounds, his anger

would prove unsightly. Yet, if she could help even one brave soldier recover from his wounds, it would be worth enduring his wrath. If her brother, Jamison, were lying wounded on some battlefield, wouldn't Papa wish someone to aid him?

Besides, how was she to gain knowledge of nursing without a patient?

A horse's soft nicker startled her, and she ducked behind the trunk of a sturdy oak. She waited, her heart at her throat. Finally venturing a look, she released the breath she'd been holding at the sight of a lone mare munching leaves. The empty saddle across her back indicated the tragic circumstances that had brought her to this desolate place. Had the rider been injured or killed?

Caroline's stomach lurched. Or was he lying in wait somewhere?

She paused to listen but heard only the sound of the bay's nervous chomping.

Convinced she was alone, she eased from her hiding place and stepped toward the animal, hand outstretched. "Easy, girl. I'll not harm you."

The horse reared its head, sidestepping as she neared. Caroline edged closer, letting the jittery mare sniff her fingertips. Speaking in low tones, she touched a gentle hand to the horse's muzzle. "There now. You're safe, girl."

A faint moan sounded several yards up ahead. Caroline sucked in a breath, stifling the urge to flee. She snatched the horse's reins and peered into the underbrush, deliberating. Should she ride away or stay to investigate?

A second groan gave her pause. She'd come to aid the wounded, hadn't she?

With a decided breath, she tugged the mare in the direction of the sound. Hiking her skirt to step over a fallen log, she panned the tangle of foliage stretched out ahead of her.

"Help."

Her gaze darted to the timber floor a few feet to her left.

Though the plea was little more than a raspy whisper, it reached her very core. No longer could she question her need to help, only her abilities.

She lifted her eyes heavenward. *Lord, grant me courage.*

Edging closer, she caught sight of the wounded soldier and clapped a hand over her mouth. Rather than Confederate gray, the injured man wore the navy uniform of a Federal. The sergeant's stripes on his sleeve hinted he would be missed by an entire squad of soldiers.

Her heart drummed in her ears. What now? Did she flee or help this man her family deemed an enemy—one of the very men her older brother sought to kill?

The soldier's eyelids flickered to half-mast. His cap had fallen, revealing a head of unkempt, dark brown hair. Though pale and marred with dirt, his face was pleasant.

One might even dare say handsome.

He cringed, pleading with her through gritted teeth. "Please, miss. I need ... your ... help."

With each breath, his chest heaved as though every word was a struggle. She wavered, torn between loyalty to her southern roots and her God-given duty to aid those in need. With a furtive glance around, she inched closer and knelt beside him. Dark stains soiled the shoulder and left side of his torn uniform.

She cleared her throat, doing her best to appear as though she knew what she was doing. "I'll need to examine your wounds."

His nod did little to bolster her confidence. With quivering hands, she pulled the wool material aside, her stomach lurching at the stench of sweat mingled with blood. Heat singed her cheeks as she reached to loosen the blood-soaked shirt-ends tied around his middle. Never in her nineteen years had she been so near a man, let alone exposed one's bare chest. She kept her attention schooled on the knotted shirt, consoling herself that a nurse was forced to abandon propriety and release fears of indecency.

She could only pray her limited knowledge of nursing would prove adequate.

She fumbled to untie the shirt, her fingers slick from fresh blood. At last, she peeled it back, wincing at the sight of the cavernous gash beneath. It didn't take a seasoned nurse to determine the wound was substantial. With so much loss of blood, it was a wonder he remained conscious.

Or perhaps he had lost consciousness for a time?

No doubt the injury would require stitches—a skill she felt ill-equipped to attempt. “Your wound is quite deep. I’m afraid it will need sewn together, but I—”

“Do it.”

His decisive command stilled her words and drained the blood from her cheeks. She'd mended clothing but never attempted to sew flesh. The notion left her a bit queasy. She shook her head. “Under such primitive circumstances, I think it best not to try it. I-I'm not experienced with that sort of thing.”

He stared up at her, flecks of blue in his silvery eyes. “Unless you do ... I'll likely ... not ... survive.”

Her feeble excuses melted under the sobering words. Though his pain must have been excruciating, he bore it with as much grit as any Southerner could muster. At last, she nodded. “I'll try.”

He seemed to relax, mouthing a weak “thank you.”

Reluctantly, she reached into her satchel and retrieved her bottle of iodine, along with a wad of cotton. As she doused the fibers with the antiseptic, she did her best not to appear nervous. In her wildest notions, she'd not dreamed her day would include tending the wounds of a Union sergeant.

But pleas for help were not something she could easily ignore.

She sensed the soldier's eyes upon her as she gently dabbed at the wound. Was he equally unnerved by these rather odd circumstances?

“What are you doing ... out here ... alone?” His breathy inquiry surprised her.

She hesitated, keeping her eyes trained on her work. “I-I was on my way to my neighbor’s to aid the injured soldiers.”

When he gave no reply, she ventured a glance his way. Whether from fatigue or fortitude, he uttered not so much as a groan, though his face pinched from time to time.

His cheeks flinched as he shifted his head toward her. “Confederate soldiers ... I’m guessin’ by your ... accent.”

She gave a slow nod.

He swallowed, his voice raspy. “Sorry to ... spoil your plans. I’m obliged ... you took notice ... of me.”

Setting the iodine aside, she wiped her hands on a cloth and reached in her bag for the needle fastened in its lining. “You needed tending to. I only did what any good Christian would.”

He nodded slightly, his eyelids growing heavy. “God ... bless you ... miss.”

His head slumped to the side, and for a moment, Caroline thought she might be free of the obligation to aid him. But his chest rose and fell in steady movements. She gnawed at her lip, half-tempted to leave him where he lay, but her conscience, along with the memory of his imploring eyes, held her in place. To desert him now would make her no less than a liar and a murderer.

She’d promised to help, and that she must do.

Having forgotten to pack thread, she stood and strode to the back of his horse, yanking a strand of hair from its tail. Not the most sanitary of materials, but it was all she had. With effort, she worked to thread the coarse hair through the eye of the needle then returned to the soldier’s side. With no means to deaden the pain, his unconsciousness proved a blessing. Whispering a prayer, she thrust the needle into his skin and pulled it through.