

PRAISE FOR BEYOND WOUNDED HEARTS

Cynthia Roemer once again dazzles with a tale of sacrifice and pain in *Beyond Wounded Hearts*. Luke and Adelaide's story is the perfect example of what it means to love someone to Christ, and weaves a glorious message of acceptance for those with even the deepest scars.

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

Set in the aftermath of America's Civil War, *Beyond Wounded Hearts* is a touching saga of love and reconciliation that will touch the heart of every reader.

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

Beyond Wounded Hearts is a journey of confronting one's greatest fears and heartaches, and finding grace and healing—even restoration—on the other side. Tender, heartfelt, and genuine characters build a story world of Reconstruction easy to enfold. A story for such a time as this from a gifted writer makes this book a must-read for every fan of hope-filled historical fiction.

— KATHLEEN L. MAHER, ACFW GENESIS
AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR OF THE SONS
OF THE SHENANDOAH SERIES

Beyond Wounded Hearts is another fantastic novel from Cynthia Roemer. This beautiful story will captivate you from the first page with its message of grace, hope, and the power of redemption in the midst of tragedy. The characters grab your heart and their tale may draw you to tears, yet leave you with hope in the joy of a life lived serving Christ. I highly recommend it!

— MISTY M. BELLER, *USA*
TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF THE
SISTERS OF THE ROCKIES SERIES

To ‘love our enemies’ has no truer test than during wartime, and author Cynthia Roemer portrays beautifully this captivating tale of one woman’s struggle to move beyond the pain and loss of war and embrace truth, trust, and acceptance. Only in the kindness and caring of those considered enemies does she see a reflection of God’s love, and the chance of forgiveness, healing, and hope. Roemer’s talent for creating well-drawn characters and her heartfelt message of faith make *Beyond Wounded Hearts* an inspiring, romantic journey that Christian historical fiction fans are sure to enjoy.

— KATE BRESLIN, AWARD-WINNING
AUTHOR, *IN LOVE’S TIME*

BEYOND
Wounded
HEARTS

Wounded Hearts • Book Two

Award-winning Author
CYNTHIA ROEMER



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Quench your thirst for story.

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*To those who have sacrificed something of themselves to bring another
person to Christ.*

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Beyond Wounded Hearts 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.

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*“When a man’s ways are pleasing to the Lord,
He makes even his enemies live at peace with him.”
(Proverbs 16:8)*



Richmond, Virginia
Monday, April 3, 1865, 2 a.m.

An explosion pierced the night, shattering the windows of the upstairs apartment bedroom and jarring Adelaide Hanover from fitful slumber. She held back a scream, trembling as she pulled her bed sheet tighter to her chest. Shrill cries and the hasty rattle of wagon wheels echoed from the street below.

This was madness.

She squeezed her eyes closed to block out the amber glow filtering through the inside shutters. Why had Aunt Polly been so stubborn? They should have fled Richmond the moment President Davis declared the Yankees would soon be upon them.

Numbness threaded through her. There was nothing left for her here now anyway.

A second blast sounded, closer this time. Her pulse quickened. With a groan, she buried her head beneath the cotton sheet. “Do you s’pose it’s the Yankees?”

When the comment garnered no reply, Addie peeled back the cover and placed a hand on the vacant spot where her aunt

should have been. She sat up and glanced around the darkened room, heart racing. “Aunt Polly?”

Dryness tore at her throat as she caught a whiff of smoke. Harried voices drifted from the street below, along with the crackle of fire. The entire city sounded in a din. Tossing her cover aside, she looped her legs over the side of the bed and sprang to her feet.

With careful steps, she ventured toward the shuttered window. Shards of broken glass peppered the floor, slicing her exposed feet in more than one place. As she opened the shutters, more glass sprayed down in a bone-rattling clatter. Ignoring the pain of the cuts, she peered into the fiery haze blanketing the night sky. It appeared the stiff south breeze had morphed Richmond into a raging inferno.

Turning, she took another quick sweep of the apartment and rested her hands on her hips. Had Aunt Polly just up and left her with the whole city crashing down around them?

By morning, all of Richmond would likely be in shambles.

And in the hands of thievin’ Yankees.

The blood drained from her cheeks. What would become of her if the Yankees overtook the city? Seventeen was a vulnerable age to fall prey to enemy soldiers. A shiver ran through her. She must find Aunt Polly.

Picking her way through the shattered glass on tiptoe, Addie went to retrieve her black taffeta dress. She let out a huff. If she knew Aunt Polly, she’d gone to look after her precious millenary shop—likely the reason she’d refused to leave in the first place. The thought pricked Addie. Did Aunt Polly care so little for her that she’d leave her to fend for herself at such a time? The least her aunt could have done was take her along.

Hurriedly donning her dress, Addie paced the room. With quivering hands, she struggled to fasten the string of buttons lining her front. No wonder Aunt Polly had never wed. All her attentions were thrown into her business. It seemed effort after

foolishness now. Whether the store be overtaken by fire or Yanks, her aunt's attempts to spare it would likely be for naught.

Another "boom" sent Addie scrambling for her boots. Though she hadn't agreed with her aunt's decision to stay, Aunt Polly was all the family she had left.

Thanks to the cursed Yankees.

She plucked a shard of glass from the ball of her foot and slid her boots on with a frustrated sigh. One way or another, she must convince her aunt it was foolhardy to stay. She jerked at her bootstrings, determined not to sleep another night in this crazed city which, if not already, would soon be overrun with Yankees.

Stomach knotted, she scurried into the hall, down the stairs, and into the chaos of the street. Pillars of fiery smoke clouds billowed overhead, shielding the stars from view. Driven by the stout wind, hot embers seared her neck and face. Even in dead of night, it was obvious the city had become a mass of ruins.

She choked back a cough and maneuvered her way through the flurry of people—more coloreds than whites. Some rejoiced, while others were in panic, racing—arms laden with belongings—from the incessant flames threatening to engulf the city. Addie pushed through the onslaught of people, her pulse thumping in her ears. Part of her wished to turn and flee with them.

But she couldn't.

Not without Aunt Polly.

Addie's breath caught as she rounded the corner leading to the business district. She stood with mouth agape, spellbound by the chaotic scene playing out before her. Looters bashed through doors and windows, darting in and out of stores, arms loaded with goods. Shouts and merriment intermingled along the congested street. The foul stench of liquor oozed from broken bottles littering the gutter, competing with the smell of smoke.

Addie puckered her face in disgust. "How dare they?"

No sooner had she spoken the words than a selfish thought darkened her spirit. Better to have Richmond vandalized and destroyed than for the murderous Yankees to get their hands on

its goods. She set her jaw. After what the Federals had done, she'd sooner see them blown to smithereens by cannon fire than have them seize a single shred of gain from the once grand city.

She glanced farther down the street to her aunt's shop and gasped. Flames spewed from the broken-out windows and holes in the roof. A nervous twinge shot through her. Surely Aunt Polly wasn't inside.

Hiking her skirt, Addie sprinted toward the blazing structure, moisture stinging her eyes. She suppressed the urge to pray. God hadn't answered her prayers in the past. Why should He now?

A wave of heat enveloped her as she neared the burning building. She shielded her face with her hand and panned the street, struggling to catch her breath. Desperate people rushed to and fro. No Aunt Polly.

The clang of fire engines echoed in the distance, and Addie's hopes rose, but fell just as quickly. With so many fires to extinguish, the firefighters would never reach the millinery in time. With the frantic way people were dashing about, she'd be hard-pressed to find anyone willing to help. Determined, Addie balled her hands into fists. If Aunt Polly needed rescued, Addie must go in herself.

With a resolute huff, she ripped a section from her shift and dipped it in an ash-tainted water trough. Tying it over her nose and mouth, she held her breath and bolted through the burned-out doorway. Thick smoke obscured her vision, threatening to choke off her air. She squinted and took a shallow breath, eyes darting from one corner of the sweltering building to the next. Greedy flames licked the walls and ceiling, transforming her aunt's shop into a consuming beast.

She cried out, cowering against the oppressive heat. "Aunt Polly!"

Amid the roar of fire, a weak cough sounded to her left. Turning, she peered through the smoke-filled millinery and glimpsed the faint image of someone lying on the floor. Heart

pounding, she rushed over and dropped to her knees. “Aunt Polly?”

Polly’s eyes flickered open, and she uttered a slight moan. “Add-ie. You shouldn’t ... have come.”

Ignoring the tempered scolding, Addie tugged at her aunt’s arm. “Can you stand?”

Aunt Polly shook her head. “My legs are ... trapped.”

Through the haze, Addie eyed the heavy timber stretched across her aunt’s legs. Her heart sank. Aflame at both ends, the menacing plank seemed insurmountable. She edged toward it, heat singeing her forehead and brows. Mustering her strength, she gripped the smoldering beam and gave it a shove, barely budging it. She pushed harder, muscles quivering under the strain. The timber finally gave way and slid from her aunt’s legs, sending a barrage of sparks flying.

Fire sprayed down from the ceiling, setting Addie’s sleeves ablaze. With a loud scream, she slapped at the flames scorching her arms. She ground her teeth against the agonizing sting, finally laying atop them to smother the flames. Tears welled in her eyes as she slinked back to her aunt.

Aunt Polly tried to rise, but fell back, releasing a string of coughs. “It’s too late ... for me. Save ... yourself.”

“No! I’ll not leave you.” Despite the throbbing burns on her forearms and hands, Addie looped her arms under her aunt’s and pulled with all her remaining strength. Numerous attempts left her only inches from where she’d started.

Addie fell back with a grunt, struggling for air. Aunt Polly’s weight being twice Addie’s, she would never accomplish this alone. Leaning close to her aunt’s face, she hollered through the soaked rag, “I’ll find help.”

Aunt Polly raised a hand to Addie’s cheek. “I’m sorry.” Something in her eyes hinted of a deeper meaning, as if she’d made a costly mistake for both of them. She swallowed, fighting for breath. “Find ... Clarissa. Don’t let him ... have her.”

Addie shook her head. “I don’t understand. Who’s Clarissa?”

Her aunt's eyes flickered and closed. With a final intake of breath, her head slumped to the side.

"Aunt Polly?" Addie choked back a sob, the flames closing in around her. She stood and weaved her way through the fallen planks, the burning in her hands and arms as excruciating as the sting of another loss. Tears welled in her eyes as she rushed into the noise and bedlam of the street. Ripping the cloth from her face, she yelled, "Help! Someone please help!"

The throng of people scurried by, ignoring her pleas.

With effort, she caught a passerby by the sleeve. "Help me, please. My aunt's trapped inside."

The older gentleman tugged his arm from her grasp, sending a surge of pain through her fingers. "See to her yourself. I've troubles of my own."

He rushed past, and Addie let out a heart-wrenching groan. With a frustrated glance around, she cried, "Won't anyone help me?"

A loud "crack" sounded above her, and she flinched. Sharp pain sliced through the top of her head, blurring her vision and driving her to her knees. Heaviness engulfed her, stealing her breath as the clamor of the street faded to dark silence.

Richmond, April 3, 1865, 11:30 am

CORPORAL LUKE GALLAGHER doused the small fire with his bucket of water. A plume of smoke billowed in the breeze as the flames flickered and died. He paused, wiping his sweat-drenched brow with his sleeve, and peered at the fiery remnants of the prized city. For months, years even, Richmond had eluded them. Now, it had fallen into their hands without resistance. And yet, its crippled remains stood as a reminder of the viciousness of war.

Sergeant Delmar stepped beside him, his bushy, wheat-blond hair nearly concealing his eyes. “Hard to believe, ain’t it?”

“Sure is. Never thought I’d see the day Richmond would fall.”

The sergeant folded his arms over his chest. “You surprise me, Gallagher. Aren’t you the one always telling me to have a little faith?”

A corner of Luke’s mouth lifted. “I never knew you listened.”

Chuckling, Delmar clapped him on the back. Several years Luke’s elder, the sergeant had taken him under his wing like a brother. “You make it a challenge not to.”

Though Luke grinned, his insides churned. He couldn’t afford to be quiet about his faith. Not after Jacob. Luke would bear the guilt of his friend until his dying day. Never again would he keep silent and allow someone he cared about to spend eternity apart from God.

Widening his stance, Sergeant Delmar puffed out his chest. “And to think, after all the fuss the Rebs gave holding us off all this time, they lit out of here without so much as a shot fired again’ us.”

Luke passed the empty bucket to the man next to him and propped his boot on a stone slab. “They sure ravaged the place. Not much left to claim.”

Delmar wiggled his eyebrows. “Except victory.”

With a snicker, Luke nodded. “It’s only a matter of time now, don’t you think? The end of the war, I mean.”

“Oh, you bet. We’ve got ’em on the run now. Grant won’t let up until he finishes the job.”

Luke inhaled a long breath. What a blessing to finally have the end of war in sight. A chance encounter with his big brother, Drew, earlier in the day made it a double blessing, leaving him all the more eager to return home to his mother and sister.

Joining the army at sixteen had seemed the thing to do following his father’s untimely death in battle. But the year and a half away from home had done little to lessen the sting of loss.

“I, for one, can’t wait to shed this uniform and don my work clothes. After this, the rigors of farming sound pret-ty good.”

“To you and me both, Gallagher.”

“Sergeant Delmar!”

The sergeant straightened and turned to face Lieutenant Fowler. “Yes, sir.”

“Assemble your men,” The stout lieutenant barked out his order. “We need to create a firewall to contain the blazes destroying Main Street.”

“Right away, sir.” As the lieutenant tromped away, Sergeant Delmar called to his men.

Passing off their water buckets, the squad of soldiers fell into formation. Luke strode at their rear, conscious of the sorrowful array of townspeople looking on.

Upon first glance, he’d cheered the ruined capital city, knowing its occupancy by Union forces meant the war’s end was imminent. But now, as he gazed into the eyes of its defeated, half-starved citizens, something within him grieved. His brother was right. These were the innocent ones caught in a web of war they had no control over.

Sweat dripped from Luke’s temples as he marched into the thick of the fires. The blistering heat and stifling scent of smoke left him wishing they’d been allowed to remain part of the bucket brigade. But no matter how challenging the circumstances, nothing could shake him.

Now that going home was within reach.

April 3, 1865, 4:30 pm

“HAVE A HEART, Corporal. The bucket brigade was child’s play compared to this.”

Luke brushed soiled hands together and peered at the

disgruntled private. “Look at it this way, Cummings. Would you rather be fightin’ Rebs or cleanin’ up after ‘em?”

The burly private scratched his stubbled chin. “I reckon you’ve a point there.”

Luke smothered a grin as the private returned to work without further complaint. Long months traipsing after Johnny Rebs and sparring with them in the Petersburg trenches had them all ready to chuck this war and head home.

A soot-covered Private Fenton tossed aside a charred beam and let out a weary huff. “The Rebs sure left this place in a sorry state. It’ll take months t’ clean up this mess, not to mention track down Jeff Davis and his cronies.”

“One thing at a time, Fenton. For now, our job is getting these fires under control.” Luke pushed his kepi higher on his forehead and skimmed the string of gutted buildings along the cluttered street. Block upon block of what appeared to have been the town’s business district lay wasted. Many buildings still ablaze.

With the fall of Richmond, thousands of lives had been uprooted, their homes and livelihoods destroyed. By joining the fight, Luke had hoped to hasten the war’s end, as well as avenge his father’s death. In reality, the violence and bloodshed had only left him empty, depleted. He glanced at the charred remains of the once-grand city. God forgive them for all the senseless killing and devastation.

“Hey, Corporal. Looka here.”

Luke shook off his ponderings and turned to see Private Fenton squatted beside something in the rubble. As he made his way over, others gathered around, concealing his view. Whatever it was had gained the troop’s full attention. Shouldering his way through, he strained to see what had the soldiers so entranced.

The pair of tattered boots and frayed black material protruding from the spot where Private Fenton had been clearing debris brought Luke to a standstill. The tiny, leather

boots were hardly bigger than ones his younger sister, Lydia, wore.

Private Fenton peered up at him like a startled deer. “It’s a ... girl.”

Luke grimaced and reached for one of the charred timbers. “Don’t just stand there. Help free her. Gently, though.”

With slow, careful movements, they worked to uncover her. Dreading the almost certain outcome, Luke knelt beside the lifeless form lying face-down on the ground. One of her arms rested outstretched, much of her sleeve melted away, revealing extensive burns to her hand and arm. Her singed black tresses lay strewn about her, tangled and matted in clumps.

With a hard swallow, he brushed aside her hair and pressed a hand to her temple. Warmth surged through his fingertips, and he released the breath he’d been holding, thanking the Lord above. “She’s alive!”

Stunned murmurs circulated through the group of soldiers.

Luke moved his fingers to the artery in the girl’s neck and cringed.

Barely.