

What Readers Are Saying

In *Listen For the Chickadees*, Terri Wangard provides wonderfully unique details into the day-to-day world of wartime nurses, fighter pilots, and photographers. She skillfully reminds us that, even in the midst of serious war work, the small joys and frustrations of life still create room for growth. Best of all, she wraps it in a sweet romance.

— Terrie Todd, award-winning author of nine historical fiction novels

A gripping story of sweet romance set against the backdrop of the WWII Pacific Theater, where a Navy fighter pilot and a Navy nurse encounter many harrowing experiences at sea. The engaging characters, fast-paced narrative, strong faith elements, and expert research immerse readers in a page-turning tale that can't be put down. A must for WWII buffs and those who enjoy great historical fiction!

— Cindy Kay Stewart, bestselling and award-winning author of *Abounding Hope*

Impeccable research, organic faith threads, and a 'behind the scenes' perspective of life on a hospital ship during wartime—Terri Wangard has done it again! *Listen to the Chickadees* once again delivers an emotionally-layered story while drawing readers' attention to one of the lesser-spotlighted warfronts of World War 2. From the devastation and chaos of Pearl Harbor to the submarine-and-shark-filled waters of the Pacific Theater, there is no shortage of harrowing moments that will send your heart into your throat and keep you invested in the outcomes. But rising from the ashes of that infamous day - and continuing across the ocean - the sweet romance between a navy fighter pilot and a navy nurse adds just the right amount of swoon and smiles to the somber history playing out on the pages.

— Carrie Schmidt, *ReadingIsMySuperPower*

Terri's newest book was worth the wait! While the setting may be familiar, the characters and storyline are not. A totally engrossing historical novel with characters I became attached to early and followed them with great interest.

— LCDR Roxanne Richards, M.D., USN
(Ret.)

Unsung Stories of World War II - Book Three

LISTEN
FOR THE
CHICKADEES

TERRI WANGARD



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*Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another,
even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

Ephesians 4:32

Chapter One



Pearl Harbor, Territory of Hawaii

Saturday, December 6, 1941

The music throbbed deep within Ensign Gloria Bloch. The *USS Pennsylvania* band was good. Really good. She tapped her toes, snapped her fingers, and swayed to the beat of “There’ll Be Some Changes Made.”

She needed this after a long day of assisting in surgery at Pearl Harbor’s Naval Hospital.

A sailor stepped up and offered his hand. “Wanna dance?”

She agreed, and they swung around the dance floor, Gloria’s skirt twirling about her legs. Her partner proved to be the better dancer, and she found herself breathless trying to keep up. When the tempo slowed, she could finally speak without gasping. “This is my first attendance at one of these competitions. Do you think the *Pennsylvania* band will advance to the finals?”

The man tilted his head. “Yes, I suppose so. Too bad you missed the semifinal two weeks ago. That’s when we qualified.”

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“We?”

He grew taller. “I’m in the *Arizona* band.” A grin creased his face. “We’re the band to beat. Tonight, we’re here to check out the competition. Don’t miss the final in two more weeks.”

When the song ended, Gloria joined the applauding crowd.

“Don’t clap too loud,” her partner joked. “The winner is determined by audience applause.”

The contest and dance ended before midnight. Gloria twirled out of the arena with the music still playing in her mind. She joined her friend Lucy at the launch queue. “Wasn’t that great?”

“It would have been perfect if I hadn’t worn new shoes. I think I broke at least three toes.”

Gloria took a deep breath. “Smell the pineapple on the breeze?”

Lucy sniffed the air. “I think you’re smelling your breath. You’ve been guzzling that pineapple juice. I saw you at the refreshment stand.”

“Killjoy.” The launch pulled up. “Are you sure it’s okay for me to stay on the *Solace*? Maybe I should go back to my quarters.”

“My bunkmate’s on Maui for the weekend. You can sleep in her berth. Come on. It’ll be fun.” Lucy tugged her along. “Pretend you’re on a cruise. Tomorrow we’ll enjoy a lazy Sunday and eat pineapple and mangoes on the deck.”

Gloria glanced around the harbor filled with warships. The hospital ship stood out in its bright white attire. “Do they allow overnight guests?”

“You have your nurse’s ID, right? They won’t know you work at the Naval Hospital instead of onboard the *Solace*. Come on. We have the day off tomorrow. It’ll be great.”

Gloria had been aboard the *USS Solace* before. While she

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enjoyed the freedom of dashing off to Honolulu's stores or strolling on the beach, living on a ship whet her curiosity. The hospital ships offered a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to experience life at sea. She should request a transfer.

"Okay. Slumber party." Gloria grinned as the launch pulled up to the *Solace*. "I haven't done this in years."

In Lucy's room and clad in Lucy's spare nightgown, Gloria hung her party dress on a hook beside the sink. "The Battle of Music was the perfect entertainment after the day I had in the operating room."

"Bad, was it?" Lucy spared her a glance in the mirror as she pin-curled her hair.

"Two sailors took a jeep for a joyride. They careened around a curve and rolled, and the driver suffered massive internal injuries. He's now minus thirty-six inches of intestines."

Lucy winced. "And the other guy?"

"He was thrown out, landed face-first, and skidded across the pavement. He'll never be the same again."

Patty and Marcail, two nurses who shared Lucy's room, entered. Patty stared at Gloria, then at her dress. "I watched you at the music competition. You almost won the jitterbug contest."

"Emphasis on almost." Gloria started tapping her toes as the music filled her mind.

Marcail spoke up. "I'm surprised you didn't win. Charlie Snead's a great dancer."

"Snead? He never told me his last name. All I know is he's in the *Arizona* band."

The nurse stared into the distance. "I danced with him two weeks ago." She wilted onto her bed with a deep sigh. "He didn't appreciate me stepping on his feet. Like about five times."

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Gloria climbed into the top bunk and smiled in the dark. Charlie Snead. She couldn't wait to meet him again at the final competition in two weeks, if not before. How long would the *Arizona* be in port? Would he be interested in her if they weren't dancing? Would he like to walk along the shore, or share a pineapple, or even have Sunday brunch at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel?

Who was she kidding? He hadn't even asked where she lived.

It wasn't like she desired to go steady with him. Her heart belonged to another man, even if he didn't want it.

* * *

Early Sunday morning, the nurses enjoyed a leisurely breakfast on deck. Marcail regaled them with tales from her days as a stewardess. Gloria hadn't laughed so hard in days.

"The airline requires stewardesses to be registered nurses, because passengers often grow nauseous in the turbulence. What they should do is test the nurses for airsickness before hiring them. There were two of us on my first flight, and I spent the entire time cleaning up after the other nurse. Of course, the smell triggered the passengers to puke. I was ever so glad to get off that airplane."

"Now you're on a ship." Lucy swiped away the mango juice dribbling down her chin. "How do you know you won't be seasick?"

Marcail raised her chin. "If I can stand the air, I can stand the sea."

Planes roaring overhead pulled their attention skyward.

"The flyboys are at it," Patty said. "So much for a peaceful Sunday." Her coffee cup rattled as she set it down with too much force.

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Boom!

They all jumped as fire burst high over Battleship Row and objects fell from the airplanes. Bombs? Another explosion sent flames and smoke billowing.

More planes flew over the *Solace*. This time, Gloria recognized the red ball on their wings. “Those are Japanese. They’re attacking us.”

Lucy fluttered her hands. “What do we do? Where do we go?”

“Nowhere.” Marcail gripped the deck railing. “They’re not attacking a hospital ship, so we’re safe. Our men aren’t, though, and they’ll need us. We need to change into our uniforms.”

The *Solace* lay anchored northeast of Ford Island, close to where the battleships berthed. The nurses’ position offered a clear view of the *Nevada* and the *Arizona*. As explosions erupted up and down Battleship Row, the percussive roars hammered in Gloria’s ears.

Boom. A bomb crashed into the near end of the *Nevada*. Sailors flew overboard like ragdolls. Gloria covered her mouth. Were they dead? No, not all of them. One sailor tried to swim. She gripped the railing. Someone needed to help him.

An enemy plane flew low, guns firing. He was strafing the men. Killing them where they stood.

A haze of billowing black smoke grew, blotting out the sun. Smoke rose from the *Arizona*, but the ship floated resolutely at its mooring. Where was Charlie? Gloria shoved her hands through her hair. What did a musician do during battle?

A doctor joined the nurses at the railing and began filming the attack. “Unbelievable,” he uttered.

Airplanes still roared overhead. Others approached from the east. Gloria gasped when torpedoes dropped from the planes, headed straight for the battleships, while bombs

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continued to rain down overhead. A metallic screech rent the air. The scream of a ship.

The masts of one of the ships swung toward the water.

“Oh, no.” Gloria wrapped her arms around her waist. “One of them’s rolling over.”

She searched the west side of Ford Island. The aircraft carriers weren’t in port. Thank goodness. That meant John Walsh wasn’t here. He was safe.

The placid blue harbor turned oily as the wounded battleships spewed their fuel. Sailors leaped from burning ships into water now glowing with flaming oil slicks. The men were neither safe on their ships nor in the water.

A Japanese plane crashed into the harbor, its wings tearing off.

“Serves you right,” Marvail screamed.

A tremendous explosion rocked the harbor, jolting the *Solace*. A tower of thick black smoke billowed high into the air. Bright flames roiled over the ships. A blast of hot air slapped Gloria. She staggered as it prickled her skin, causing her eyes to water. Chunks of debris clattered onto the deck. A piece whizzed past her. She crouched at the railing, staring at the place where the *Arizona* had berthed.

The doctor steadied his camera. “*Arizona* blew up.” He spoke in such a dispassionate tone despite the fact so many men remained on board that ship.

Gloria tried to swallow. Tried to breathe. Could anyone have survived that maelstrom?

She stifled a cry. What about Charlie?

Around them, orderlies onboard the *Solace* hustled to lower the ship’s launches. Already, small boats zipped around the harbor, plucking survivors from the oily mess.

Lucy grabbed Gloria’s arm. “Come on. You can wear one of

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my uniforms. We need to be ready when the boats bring back survivors.”

“But ...” Gloria worked at the Naval Hospital. She should report there.

Who was she kidding? The route from the *Solace* to the hospital traversed Battleship Row. No one in their right mind would attempt to make that journey. With a last glance at the raging funeral pyre that was the *Arizona*, she stooped to pick up a fragment of the shattered ship and hastened after Lucy.

After scrambling into the ill-fitting dress, Gloria rushed back outside. Patients already lined the deck, many coated in oil. An aide coaxed the men to drink grapefruit juice. Gloria longed for a sip to relieve her own parched throat, but the men needed it to break down the oils they had ingested.

A doctor stationed at the gangway barked orders, sending some inside for immediate surgery, others to be left for later. Or not at all.

One poor man lay blackened from head to toe. Gloria winced when his arm twitched. Life still lingered, but he wouldn't last long.

The doctor pointed at her. “Get this man to the operating room.”

She hastened to the patient and hailed a corpsman to help move him. He would know where the ship's surgery was located.

Corpsmen pushed a sailor onto the operating table. He looked like he should still be in school. Gloria sponged his face, and his eyes opened. “What ship are you from?”

His lips parted and formed a word. “*Nevada.*”

He must have been outside on deck when the *Arizona* exploded, and hot, searing debris peppered him. Gloria closed her eyes for a moment. She'd become a nurse for this reason. To help suffering people. And this poor boy was truly suffering.

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A doctor surveyed the boy's injuries. "We'll start with the abdominal wound." He called out across the operating room, "Remember, people. Most of these boys ate breakfast and have full bowels. Watch out for contamination of abdominal wounds. Use liberal doses of crystalline sulfanilamide." He spotted Gloria. "I don't remember you."

"I'm assigned to the Naval Hospital, but I can't return there now, so I'm helping here."

"Right." He pointed with his chin. "Anesthetic." He began probing for shrapnel before the gas could take effect, but the sailor was unconscious.

While the next patient was brought in, Gloria brought another tray of sterilized instruments. Glimpsing the wounded man, she swallowed hard. Much of his jaw was missing, and his nose hung to one side. Gurgling moans emanated from the man's throat.

Her mind flashed back to a day seared into her memory when she was seven years old. She and her father had passed a man on a Milwaukee sidewalk.

"Daddy, why is he wearing a mask?"

"He must have lost his face in the Great War, sweetheart. Some wounds never heal."

Dad had been shot in the leg while serving in France. He saw lots of gruesome injuries in the hospital. Would the man before her be condemned to hiding hideous injuries behind a mask?

The attending physician transferred him to a reconstructive specialist and dismissed Gloria. "The burn ward is overwhelmed. They need you there."

She lost count after her third burn patient. Many *Arizona* sailors had survived the blast, but most were coated in oil. Too many were burned, their skin sloughing off. Her stomach roiled

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at the odor of burnt flesh, and her eyes watered. She brushed her wrist across her eyes and caught a new scent.

Perfume. She'd sampled Patty's and Marvail's perfume so long ago this morning, and her right wrist still carried the scent of gardenia. Heavenly. The sick churning inside her eased as her equilibrium returned. After another deep inhale, she set to work.

When the medical team lifted a new patient onto the table, his burned skin came off and stuck to the sheet. Gloria grabbed a new sheet, spread oil on it, and slid it under the man. A corpsman wrapped the sheet around him.

"He gets priority for a saline-immersion bath. Make it happen."

With a start, Gloria realized the doctor had spoken to her. She scribbled the order on a tag, and the sailor was moved to the bath.

Another nurse used a flit-gun to spray a man's burns. When she was called away, she thrust the gun into Gloria's hands. "Continue with this, will you?"

Gloria had never used a flit-gun before, but it produced fabulous results. After a quick perusal, she aimed the gun at the next man.

He squeaked as the spray touched his arm. "Um, miss? What are you doing?"

"This is a wax-like coating that will soothe your skin and aid the healing process. Is the pain lessening?"

He opened his mouth, then closed it as his lips curled on one side. "Yeah. Yeah, it is." He breathed heavily for several seconds. "But that thing looks like an insecticide sprayer."

Gloria smiled. "This is better. It has paraffin wax, Vaseline, cod-liver oil, and a drug with a fancy name. I believe it also has a little eucalyptus oil and menthol. That's what I'm smelling."

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The patient beside him watched the process. “May I have some, too, please?”

How polite. Despite his pain, he minded his manners. His mother would weep.

“You’re next.” Gloria finished with the first patient, then turned to him. “As I understand it, this wax will be washed off and renewed daily. We aren’t cleaning your burns first. The wax takes care of that. It helps stop the pain because it covers exposed nerve endings.”

The man closed his eyes. His whole face needed relief, but she dared not spray around his eyes. Across the aisle, another nurse applied oil-soaked sheets with holes cut for eyes, nose, and mouth. Gloria caught her attention and pointed to her patient. The nurse thrust a sheet at her.

While applying the sheet, Gloria asked, “What ship were you on?”

One eyelid crept open. “*Arizona*. I was outside ... helping set up for church. A plane strafed us. My buddy was shot. He was lying there ... on the deck ... waiting to be taken to sickbay ... when the ship blew up. It just blew up.” He panted. “I guess the decks collapsed. Everything fell into the hole. Including my friend. Fire. Everywhere.”

Gloria poked a finger into his clenched fist and stroked his unburned palm. “You’re safe now. The *Solace* is safe. Think of home. Where is home?”

“Kansas.”

“Think of waves of grain.”

The next patient had already died. Gloria signaled the corpsmen to remove him. They deposited another sailor in his place.

Gloria sniffed her left wrist. She would buy her own bottles of plumeria next time she ventured into Honolulu. She would need more in the future if she was assigned to the burn

ward often. Squaring her shoulders, she approached her next patient.

The sun dipped low in the west when she slipped into a washroom and splashed water on her face. Lucy brought her a glass. "Pineapple juice?"

Gloria drained it. "That was so good." She reached into her pocket to freshen her lipstick but didn't find the tube in the borrowed dress. "Patty said six months of supplies were used today. We don't seem to be receiving more patients."

"Let's go outside and see. I could use some fresh air."

The air wasn't fresh, however. It stank of smoke and oil and gunpowder. Gloria's nose twitched. And burnt flesh. The smells of war.

In the harbor, little boats pattered around, retrieving bodies. Smoke and flames continued to rise from the *Arizona*. The forward mast canted to one side, having collapsed into the gutted hull. "One of the men from *Arizona* said they'd taken on more than a million gallons of fuel yesterday. They arrived in port on Friday and were heading to the mainland in a few days for an overhaul."

"The mainland?" Lucy frowned. "Didn't you say the band was supposed to play in the finals in two weeks? Did they expect to return in time?"

"I wonder." Gloria shrugged. "But it doesn't matter now."

A barge pulled up to the *Solace*, and Gloria realized some of the crew planned to depart. "I should go." She hugged Lucy. "I'll claim my dress when I return your uniform."

The barge deposited her on Ford Island. Not exactly helpful. The southern tip of the island lined up with the Naval Hospital across the channel—more than a mile from where she stood. Oh, well. The exercise would do her good and bring her that much closer to her goal.

The tiny island offered a better vantage point to view the

destruction. A line of destroyers anchored off the northern tip of Ford hadn't been attacked. Did the sailors appreciate how being small had been to their advantage, unlike the blazing battleships? Gloria paused at the terrible sight. Every last one of them spouted flames. All except for the one that had rolled over.

"Nurse! Hey, nurse." A pharmacist's mate called to her from the Bachelor Officers' Quarters. "Can you help us? We have an emergency treatment station set up for casualties."

She longed to sit quietly somewhere. Put her feet up. Process all the horror that had just taken place. But men still needed her. Of course she would help.

Inside, she found oil-covered sailors strewn about. These men were in better shape than those on the *Solace*.

"We hope we can transfer them to real hospitals soon, now that most of the badly wounded have been recovered. In the meantime, we're trying to clean them up. We ran out of supplies and stripped the beds to make bandages. We told an officer we needed solvent or alcohol to cleanse wounds. That's what he brought us." The pharmacist's mate pointed to a case of scotch. "I guess that will work just as well."

Gloria stared, befuddled, when he handed her pieces of a torn sheet and a bottle of scotch. She shrugged. Better scotch than nothing. She headed for the nearest man covered with the gooey black film of oil, saturating a sheet-turned-towel with alcohol.

"Ah. Thank you, miss." He grabbed the bottle and took a swig.

Oh dear.

The man promptly vomited. She jumped back as he spewed out globs of oil mixed with scotch. Glancing back at the pharmacist's mate, she offered a weak smile. "Inducing

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vomiting is one way of ridding him of all that oil and contaminated water.”

Several other men clamored for a gulp of the “medicine.” A medic carried around a bottle and a garbage can to serve as an emesis pail.

Gloria eyed the door, eager to leave the malodorous quarters. She nodded to the medic. “I’m sure they’ll do fine until they reach a hospital.”

Outside, darkness fell as an ambulance pulled up. Learning they were headed to the wharf for transfer to the Naval Hospital, she tarried, hoping to hitch a ride.

A group of planes flew in low to land on Ford Island’s airstrip. Every antiaircraft gun in the vicinity began shooting at them. The driver banged his fist on his doorframe. “Idiots! Those planes are from the *Enterprise*. They’re shooting down our own planes.”

A flaming plane crashed into the harbor, and Gloria’s heart turned to ice. John Walsh flew off the *Enterprise*.

John, where are you?