

SILENT *Storm*

An H&G Mystery
book three

CHRISTINA ROST



Scrivenings
PRESS

Quench your thirst for story.

www.ScriveningsPress.com

Copyright © 2026 by Christina Rost

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 978-1-64917-630-1

eBook ISBN 978-1-64917-631-8

Editors: Ann Harrison and Kaci Banks

Cover design by Christina Rost

This is a work of fiction. Unless otherwise indicated, all names, characters, businesses, events, and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

Scripture quotations are from the ESV Bible® (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

NO AI TRAINING: Without in any way limiting the author's [and publisher's] exclusive rights under copyright, any use of this publication to "train" generative artificial intelligence (AI) technologies to generate text is expressly prohibited. The author reserves all rights to license uses of this work for generative AI training and development of machine learning language models.

To all who love with open arms.

And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. And they went and woke him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing."

And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?" Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.

And the men marveled, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?"

Matthew 8:23-27 ESV



PROLOGUE

1889

*Unassigned Lands, Indian Territory
North America*

Jack Oliver surveyed his claim as streaks of brilliant orange melted into the dusty plain, drawing the curtain on another day. “Amelia, I wish you were here.”

Heart heavy, he crouched, brushed his fingers across the red earth, the grains of sandy clay coating his palm with rust-colored pigment. “Red bricks, sweetheart. The soil is the color of red bricks.”

He placed the metal box into the hole he’d dug and covered it with dirt. The last material items belonging to his wife. Other than her music box. And the gold he’d left in the town up north.

Scooping up a handful of dirt, he let it slip through his fingers and into the hole like sand in an hourglass counting down time. Time he wished he could turn back. Time that lingered now that his heart was only half of what it was when she was alive.

As he packed down the dirt, memories of his late wife waltzed around the dance floor of his mind. Amelia Taylor had captured his heart at first glance. She, the daughter of wealthy Londoners, and he, the son of a vicar, had ignored the murmurs to dissuade their union and married young.

Amelia stood by him when, in his father’s shadow, he took his place at the pulpit of the parish church. They loved passionately as

dreams of family took root in their hearts. But God had a different plan.

The lost children are our children now.

He stood, and a shiver rent through him as Amelia's words carved a valley through his soul. After two miscarriages, her mother's heart turned to the throwaways blanketing the London streets like discarded pebbles along the River Thames.

While they wiped noses, scrubbed sooty feet, and dished out porridge to the least of these, God birthed in them a new dream—a haven for forgotten children. Children without arms to hold them and gentle hands to brush away their tears. Not another dark and damp charity house, but a refuge in the storm. A loving harbor where children could thrive and grow.

Jack dusted his hands across his thighs. "God, did You mean for me to embark on this dream alone?"

He scanned the horizon, waiting for a reply. Instead, the wind stirred, and dust slapped across his cheeks. A reprimand. Or maybe a warning. Tears stung his eyes as another round of memories assailed him of Amelia's third—and last—pregnancy.

"It's a girl." The doctor shot him a worried look. "But I'm afraid she won't linger."

"I want to hold her." Tears streamed down Amelia's face as her arms begged for her baby.

The doctor hesitated before he laid the limp babe in Amelia's arms.

"Hannah, my love. Rest, sweet one. Rest."

Jack's heart squeezed. Hannah. Favor. Grace. But how could this be God's favor? Or His grace?

As Amelia sprinkled kisses on Hannah's pale cheeks, she sang, "Though the waves threaten to pull me under, and thunder throws me off kilter, my Savior brings the calm. He's the silence in the storm."

"She's losing too much blood." The doctor's anxious tone sliced through the haunting melody.

"What do you mean? Do something." First the babe, and now his wife. "God, don't take them." He wrapped his arms around them both, begging God to intervene. "Take me, Lord. Take me."

"My love." Amelia's head lolled onto his chest, face ashen. "Go ... Go to ... America. Start a new life. Build our dream under a new sky."

Jack swallowed past the boulder in his throat as he fisted his hand

and pressed his knuckles hard into his lips. A new dream. Under a new sky. *God, is this what I'm supposed to do?*

Thunder banged. The canopy above him had morphed from a burnt orange to a deep magenta as black clouds crawled across the evening sky. Every prayerful step had led him here, to this patch of land. But why?

He ducked into his tent and grabbed Amelia's music box. Thieves were moving across the settlements, leading everyone to bury their valuables. This was the last item that mattered to him. The last item he'd bury.

As he stepped out of the tent, he pried open the lid of the music box, inserted the crank, and gave it a turn. The tinkle of Amelia's song circled through the humid air.

Jack sang along. "Alas, remove your focus from the wind and waves, rest in the quiet of His loving arms. When the tempest lingers on, there's silence in the storm." He closed the lid, shoved it under his arm, and walked several paces to an old oak tree.

"Preacher."

He stiffened at the sound of a gruff voice behind him. He'd earned the nickname after a few dusty hecklers called him out for preaching on the Sabbath to a crowd of land grabbers tied to a tree.

"What can I help you with, son?" Jack squeezed the music box in the crook of his arm but didn't turn around. "It's kind of late for a social call."

Click.

Jack's heart jammed in his throat. "I don't want any trouble. Is there something you need?"

The man behind him snorted. "I can't let you have this land."

"Oh? Why?"

"Railroad's comin'. Land out here gonna be prime, and we alls heard you're fix'n to open an orphanage."

"Children's home. And I'm here on God's mission."

"God's mission?" The man cackled. "I'm on a bigger mission. Makin' money."

"If it's money you want—"

"I ain't ever heard of a man of the cloth with two coins to his name."

Jack swallowed hard.

"Sides, land's more valuable than gold, Preacher. Now turn

around. I ain't never shot a man in the back, and I don't plan to today."

Still cradling the music box under his left arm, Jack turned. *God ... is this part of the plan? What about the children?*

"Most of these is made-up names. To get the town on the map." The man's gaze flitted to the stake near the riverbed. "No one'll be the wiser when I switch mine with yours."

"What if I walk away?" Jack's pulse kicked like an angry mule. "We can pretend like we never met."

Thunder boomed overhead, but neither of them flinched.

"Ever hear the sayin' 'silent as the grave'? I cain't have you tellin' tales about me, now can I?" The man's gaze swept the open prairie. "It's just you and me out here."

"And me." A figure stepped out of the shadows, a pistol leveled at them both.

The first man spat on the ground. "This ain't got nothin' to do with you, Raymond."

Brothers? The two men eyed each other like Cain and Abel. Jack slid his hand down his thigh, fingers searching for his weapon as he nodded to the darkening sky. "A storm's brewing. Why don't we talk about this tomorrow? Like gentlemen."

"The funny thing is, we ain't gentlemen." The first man's yellow teeth glowed as a flash lit up the sky.

"This is my land, Richard, and I ain't sharing it." Raymond snarled out a curse. "You been takin' things from me all my life. I ain't gonna let you take this."

"Is that right?" A dark laugh escaped Richard's lips. "You ain't never had the guts to—"

"Now, listen here." Jack stepped between the brothers.

A shot rang out. Then another. Followed by a clap of thunder.

Fire ripped across Jack's midsection. His knees buckled, he dropped to the ground, the music box tumbling out of his grasp and falling open to the red dirt.

"Amelia. My love." He pawed at the hole in his gut, blood seeping through his fingers and dripping to the ground.

Richard lay beside him, a bullet wound to the chest.

Raymond slid from the shadows and stood over him. "Mighty sorry, Preacher. I didn't mean for you to get caught in the crossfire. It's nothing personal."

"Amelia." His wife's song mingled with the wind, staining the tepid air with its haunting melody.

"Is Amelia your woman?" Raymond shoved his gun in its holster.

"She's she ..." Jack strained to gather his breath. "God can forgive you, son. I ... forgive you."

Raymond spat on the ground. "Don't need God or anyone else to forgive me."

"We *all* need God's forgiveness."

Lightning flashed in the clouds as fat droplets fell from the sky, soaking the earth

Jack rolled to his back, opened his arms, and cried out. "God forgive this man. Turn his family to you. Don't let my death be in vain."

"Don't need your prayers, neither." Raymond shuffled away as the storm bucked and swayed across the prairie like an angry bull.

Straining for his final breaths, Jack whispered the last words from Amelia's song. "As God draws nigh, He silences the storm."