

Dedication

To my Friends, who have encouraged and cheered me on since the beginning.

And to my Family, who never ceased to support me.

But especially for my momma

Who taught me to love books, and find inspiration in the journeys of life.

~ Lillian E.

Early Praise For A Thousand Stars

“A Thousand Stars is a worthy book equal to Lewis’ Narnia books and Nesbit’s The Magic City. - Noah Lynch, Author of Squire of Valana and The Silver Hand.”

- *Noah Lynch, Author*

Readers of authors such as C.S. Lewis, classical literature, and E. Nesbit will find *A Thousand Stars* a wonderful read for family and individuals. It weaves the stories of Jimmy and Hopeful together in an exciting and touching way.

Lillian E. excels at foreshadowing, developing her characters, and taking from classical literature.

A Thousand Stars is a worthy book equal to Lewis’ Narnia books and Nesbit’s *The Magic City*.

- **Noah Lynch, Author of *Squire of Valana* and *The Silver Hand*.**

“Our kids didn’t want to ever stop reading the battle between good and evil, the value of family, love, loyalty, and honor... we highly recommend this book!”

- *Jake Kail, Author and Speaker*

Our family was instantly drawn into the story of *A Thousand Stars* and our kids didn’t want to ever stop reading. Lillian’s writing style is engaging, fun, and creative. Each chapter fills in more of the mystery that is unfolding in Hopeful’s journey, and it is woven together in a beautiful and exciting way. The novel portrays the battle between good and evil, the value of family, and godly character traits such as love, loyalty, and honor. We highly recommend this book!

-Jake and Anna Kail and Family

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Chapter One

Hope is Not Lost

It had been many years since his last battle. But the memories of war and the ache of old wounds still awoke him each morning. The same memories that caused the ache in his heart were also the memories which kept him alive and gave him hope. His daily trips to wash in the stream in front of his humble cottage were filled with visions of yesteryear. And now, under the shade of the ancient drooping willow tree, memories came flooding back as he recounted his family, and the love they had shared.

He recalled those first breathtakingly beautiful moments when he had met his last child, a daughter. He'd gathered the delicate pink bundle into his arms and kissed the wispy locks of red hair.

His son and young daughter had been delighted when they first laid eyes on their new baby sister. He would give anything to see their faces again light up with pride when the fat little hand grabbed hold of their toddler fingers.

Four years, how quickly they'd passed, four years of joy, four years of love and prosperity, four years of peace.

Then the revolt. Every person distrusted the other. Shadows lurked behind each door. The sorrow, the pain, the injustice. And was he with his people to help them?

No.

They had thrown him out, they'd been deceived by the betrayer. His people had given up prosperous labor and happiness for a few days of idol pleasure. But now they were trapped in sorrow and evil, hatred and slaughter, and all because they tried to go their own way, they would not listen to their king.

His heart broke for his people. Oftentimes, under the willow tree and to the lull of the humming brook, he would dream a wonderful and vivid dream of a rescue that would save their lost home. Of three young children who would unite against the evil that had ransacked the island.

Of his son, who would one day return to him.

Until that blessed day would come, he would stay, waiting, watching, and hoping that one day he would return.

Chapter Two

A Young Hope

Dark clouds swept across the sky as a young girl with fiery red hair darted into the street. She moved deftly through the crowds of people, ducking under carriages and dodging the pounding hooves of nervous horses. Close to her chest, she clutched a worn book and a white paper parcel.

Now and then, the girl would go up to a particularly sad looking horse, and gently slip a sweet apple slice from the white parcel into its mouth, lightly kissing their velvety noses as she did so and whispering, “Don’t be sad, my darlings!”

Soon, however, she found it was time to go and left the horses hurriedly. Her real reason for departure being that a coachman started yelling at her after finding an apple in his horse's feed bag. She disappeared through the thick throngs of people, stopping on the doorstep of the town store. She reached into the pocket of her dress and rattled the coins together.

Smiling with satisfaction at the sound, she flung open the door, strode to the counter and laid down a handful of hard-earned pennies. The cashier looked up from his work and smiled. “Well, well, if it isn't Miss Salix. What can I get for you today?” He asked cheerily.

“Licorice,” was the prompt reply.

“And how many will that be?”

“However many that'll buy.” She pointed to the counter.

“Would ya’ like red or black licorice?” He gave her a teasing smile.

“Mr. Zephyr! You know my order inside and out, and you still ask me every time!” The girl tossed her red curls and grinned at him.

He chuckled and produced seven pieces of the black licorice from a glass jar and stuffed them into a bag.

“You still got some money left, how about a peppermint drop?”

“Yes, please sir!” She beamed and held out an expectant hand.

Zephyr dropped one of the red striped candies into her palm with a wink.

“Thank you!” Popping the peppermint in her mouth, she grabbed the bag and ran out the door.

After quite a few twists and turns, the young girl stopped in front of the Barnaby Orphanage.

“Caaandy! Come and get it boys!” She called, banging a stick against the iron gate. Suddenly, six boys dropped from a high tree, whose branches sprawled over the thick stone wall.

“What'd ya bring us this time hothead?” The oldest one asked with a friendly tug on the girl's hair. She laughed and tossed him the bag, watching their delighted faces as the strands of licorice were quickly divided between the boys.

Smiling, she ran off, calling gaily over her shoulder, “Remember to save a piece for Chrispin!”

Chrispin was the boys' spotted gray horse, who had developed quite a sweet tooth, especially for licorice. It was on him that she had learned to ride only a few years prior.

Then the girl was gone, running again down main street until she came to an abrupt halt in front of an old building, a sign above whose door read, “Gillian's Boarding House.” She entered, hanging her patched green coat on a hook as she walked by.

The owner of the house looked up and smiled. “Good morning, Miss Salix.”

“Good morning,” she replied gaily. Then the girl turned and climbed the winding stairway to the third floor, where she went quietly to her room.

Her given name was Hopeful Flow Salix, but she much preferred to be called Hope. She was a pretty girl of twelve and quite small for her age, with a whimsical look about her and trusting silver eyes that seemed large in the small face of their owner. Her hair was a fiery red and she usually let it fall about her shoulders, allowing it to take on a windblown appearance.

Hope never ceased to have a book nearby, and, today, she had picked up one of her favorite Shakespeare volumes. She had read it over a hundred times, but she never ceased to enjoy reading about the tragically beautiful tale of *Romeo and Juliet*.

Then, just as she was getting to her favorite scene, there was a knock at her door.

“Come in,” she called, without raising her eyes from the page.

“Hopeful, Mother wants you,” her brother Rowen said softly.

Hope turned to look at him. Rowen, her fifteen-year-old brother, stood in the doorway, his hands in his pockets and a worried expression on his face.

“What’s wrong?” Hope asked.

“I don’t know...but Papa’s been in with her for quite a while now. I think you’d best hurry.”

Hope nodded and went quickly to the door of her parents’ room. All was silent, and she took a deep breath before quietly pushing the door open.

Papa was sitting on Mother’s bedside, holding her frail hand in his strong one.

“Papa?” She said softly. “You wanted me?”

He turned and patted the bed beside him.

“Come Hopeful. Your mother and I have something to tell you.”

She obeyed and sat down gently next to her mother.

“Hope...you know these are hard times...I haven’t been able to find a job these past few months, and the little money Rowen earns...it just barely covers our rent.” Hope watched her father’s face intently. “Hope...we think it would be best if...” He paused, as if reluctant to tell her of the decision he’d made. “If we sent you to your grandmother’s.”

“What?” Hope gasped, shocked. Was she to be sent away from her own family?

“It will take at least another month to save for the train ticket, but we can do it in time. You would be cared for better there and she would have the money to keep you fed and clothed.” He put a hand to her shoulder, but she pulled away.

“I shan’t go!”

“Hope-” Her father implored.

“I’m not leaving you and mother! This is my home. I won’t leave you-”

“Hopeful,” her mother said softly. “It’s for the best. We don’t want you to leave any more than you do...but we just can’t give you the life and education you need.”

“But this *is* my life, right here.”

“It’s not the life I want you to have. I don’t want you to grow up in this stuffy hotel, constantly having to make do with the meager meals. I want you to get a good education, so you can follow all your dreams.”

“But all my dreams are right here...with you and Papa and Rowen,” Hope said, a lump rising in her throat. “This is all I want.”

“What we want and what we need are two very different things Hopeful,” her mother replied simply.

Hope hung her head. Then looked up at her parents, defiance flaring in her eyes. “I won’t go.”

Then Hope fled from the room. She ignored the calls of Rowen as he tried to stop her flight.

She burst onto the streets and flew past the crowds, past the horses, past the store, not caring where she went. As she ran, the rain began to fall, and it mixed with the salty tears that rolled down the cheeks of a young girl with red hair.

Hope stirred as cold droplets of water dripped onto her face, the ground was hard beneath her soaked body, and a thin river of water toyed playfully with her dress.

Her eyelids fluttered open, and she watched as the hooves of horses passed by her side, the drivers hardly glancing down at the bedraggled form lying in a heap outside the gates of the Barnaby Orphanage.

She drew her knees up to her chin. *Was this what it was like to be one of those homeless children she befriended on the street?* Hope wondered as she rubbed grubby hands across her tear-streaked face, then buried her head in her arms. Listening to the footsteps of passersby, her heart felt heavy as each footstep would fade away into the distance.

“Excuse me, are you alright?” A soft whisper beside her ear made Hope jump, and she looked around for the owner of the voice.

“Who said that?” She whispered back. “Where are you?”

“I did.” This time there was the sound of boots resounding on the cobblestones and Hope looked up into the cheery face of a young man, who would have looked quite richly dressed, had he not been wearing a shirt bearing traces of jam covered fingers, and trousers that were stained green at the knees.

“Who are you?” She asked, wondering how long he had lived at the Orphanage, and why she had never seen him before.

“I’m Henry.” He knelt down next to her, and his boyish grin vanished. “Are you lost?”

Hope bit her lip. “No sir, I’m just headed into town.”

Henry grinned again. “Well now, what a coincidence! I’m heading into town now too. Could I give you a ride?”

“A ride? In what?”

“My carriage of course!” Henry laughed, pointing to a handsome black carriage sitting alongside the road.

Hope's eyes widened. “Could I really?”

“Absolutely.” Henry held out a large hand to help her up, but instead of taking it, Hope gave a little squeal of delight and flung her arms about his neck.

“Oh, thank you, thank you!” She whispered, locking her hands about his neck as he gathered her into his arms.

“Henry?” A sweet voice said from behind the two of them.

Turning, they found that the voice belonged to a woman with chestnut colored hair cascading about her shoulders, and a light green dress exactly matching her laughing eyes. “Well, well, who's this?” She asked, smiling at Hope.

“A young lady who's going for a ride with us.” He grinned, and started towards the carriage, the woman keeping up behind him.

Henry placed Hope in the carriage with his wife. Then he stepped lightly up into the driver's seat and clucked to the horses.

At the first jolt of the carriage, Hope gave a little gasp of delight and eagerly poked her head out the carriage window waving at any passerby who happened to catch her gaze.

“My name is Elinore, who are you?” The young woman asked.

“Hope,” Hope said, removing her head from the window.

“Such a lovely name! Now tell me, as I am dying to know, how you came to be asleep outside of the Orphan House. One for boys only, I might add.”

Hope hesitated for only an instant. Then the whole story came pouring out. How her mother was ill, and there was not enough money for medicine, almost every cent going into food and the rent. How they thought it best to send her away to her grandmother’s, the reason for why she had run away.

Hope even confided in Elinore the story of how, unknown to her parents, she had been bringing candy to the Orphan boys. They, in return, had taught her to ride their pony, Chrispin, and let her borrow books from their library.

Elinore was quiet for a moment. “Why do you wish to stay? Most young girls I can think of would leap at the chance for a better life than the one it seems you’ve been living.”

“I just don’t like to leave my mother.” Hope bit her lip. “And, besides, I don’t know if I’ll like Grandmother. I’ve never seen her before.” Hope twisted her fingers in the hem of her dress. “But I wanna stay here.”

“What we want and what we need are two very different things, Hope.”

“That’s what Mother said too.” Hope scrunched up her freckled nose.

Elinore smiled. “What if you and I made a bargain?”

“What kind of a bargain?” Hope frowned

“If you promise to go home to your family and go to your grandmother’s. Then I’ll promise to provide you with suitable clothes and money for the journey. Plus,” she added as an afterthought, “I’ll take you to a bookstore and you can pick out any two books you like to take with you.”

Hope sat stunned, mouth hanging open, staring at this suddenly even more wonderful lady.

“I’ll run straight home and be ever so good! Cross my heart!” She said, her excitement nearly causing her to burst.

“Alright, but first I must write down my address, come and see me this evening if your parents will allow it,” Elinore said.

When Elinore was finished, Hope let out a whoop of joy and gave the delighted lady a grateful kiss on the cheek.

When she had finished bidding her farewells to her new friends, she burst through the doors and found a tired Rowen, sitting on the steps with his head in his hands.

“Rowen? What’s wrong? Is it mother?” She asked, going hurriedly to his side.

Rowen raised his head from his hands and his face lit up with joy. He took her in his arms and held her close.

“Oh, Hope, don’t you ever do that again. I was out all night lookin for you.” He shook Hope, then embraced her tightly. “I was afraid we’d lost you for good,” he said gently, and Hope could hear a slight crack in his voice.

“Aww, you’d never lose me.” She hugged him back, burying her nose in his warm jacket. “You didn’t tell mother?” She questioned, slightly worried.

“Of course not,” he said with a little frown. “But you shouldn’t have run off like that.”

She hung her head. “Sorry Rowen.”

He gave her a reassuring pat on the back. “It’s alright now that you’re safe at home. So, tell me now, what adventure did my little sister go on?”

Hope laughed merrily and excitedly related to him the story of Mrs. Elinore, and how she’d promised to give her nice clothes and money for the trip. “And best of all,” Hope said, nearly dancing with delight. “Mrs. Elinore said she would take me to go and pick out two new books! Think of that Rowen! Two books, all my own!”

“You struck on some luck today, my fine friend!” Rowen laughed. “Come on, you’d best get yourself dressed in some dry clothes. Then tell Papa all about your bargain.”

“Alright.” Hope said, and bounded up the stairs, two at a time. Suddenly, she came to an abrupt halt. A strange unearthly melody drifted to her ears; one she was almost certain she’d heard before.