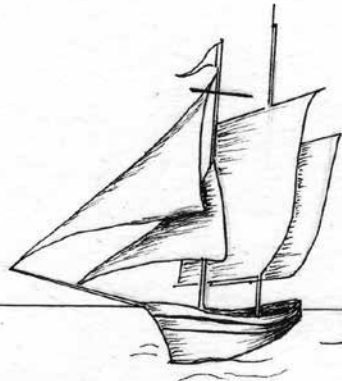


A
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Island

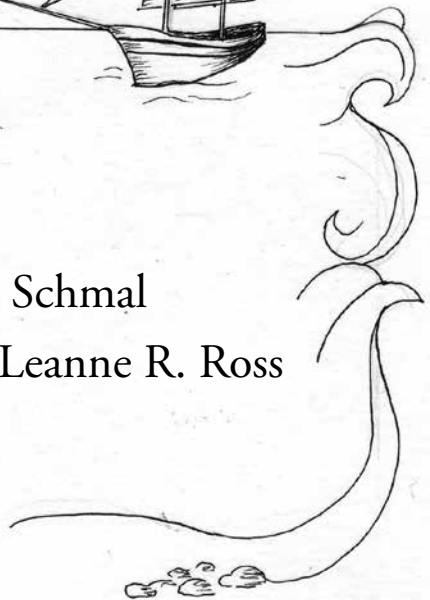


Children of The Light Series®
Book Four

Christmas



Mary I. Schmal
Illustrated by Leanne R. Ross



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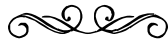
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Dedicated to twins Ronan and Kara, to
Bethany, and to all others who enjoy a
Christmas Eve birthday, including my brother
Dave who was born the day before. I hope you all
enjoy a Christmas Eve birthday as much as I do!



Other Books in the *Children of the Light* Series®

Book 1: *The Wandering Pirate Ship*

Book 2: *Moon Glow and Twisted Brew*

Book 3: *Trapped in the Tower*

Lillian Elisabeth
Bates (12)



(-twins-)



Luke Stephen Paul
Bates (12)

Florence (Dellie) Delight
Werde (10)



(-cousins-)
of the Bates

The Children of the Light



Garrett
DeLibert
Werde (12)



Julia Rose
Bates (11)



Paulina Anne Bates (10)

Thomas Silas Charles
Bates (9)



Gabriel Merritt
Bates (8)

(-twins-)



Madelaine Kathryn
Bates (8)

The Nine Children of the Light Family Tree

Lillian Bates
Luke Bates
Julia Bates
Paulina Bates
Thomas Bates
Madelaine Bates
Gabriel Bates

Cousins

Josiah Harcombe
Katrina Harcombe
Dontae Harcombe
Stephanos Harcombe
Mara Harcombe

Garrett Wrede
Dellie Wrede

Parents

Curtis Bates
Iona (Wrede) Bates

Uncle and Aunt

Daniel Harcombe
Eugenie (Wrede) Harcombe

Parents

Frederick Wrede Jr.
Violet (Harcombe) Wrede

Uncle and Aunt

James Wrede
Julianne Wrede
(Twins)

Cornelia Sweet

Grandparents

Rev. Frederick Wrede
Emma (Sweet) Wrede

Merritt Sweet

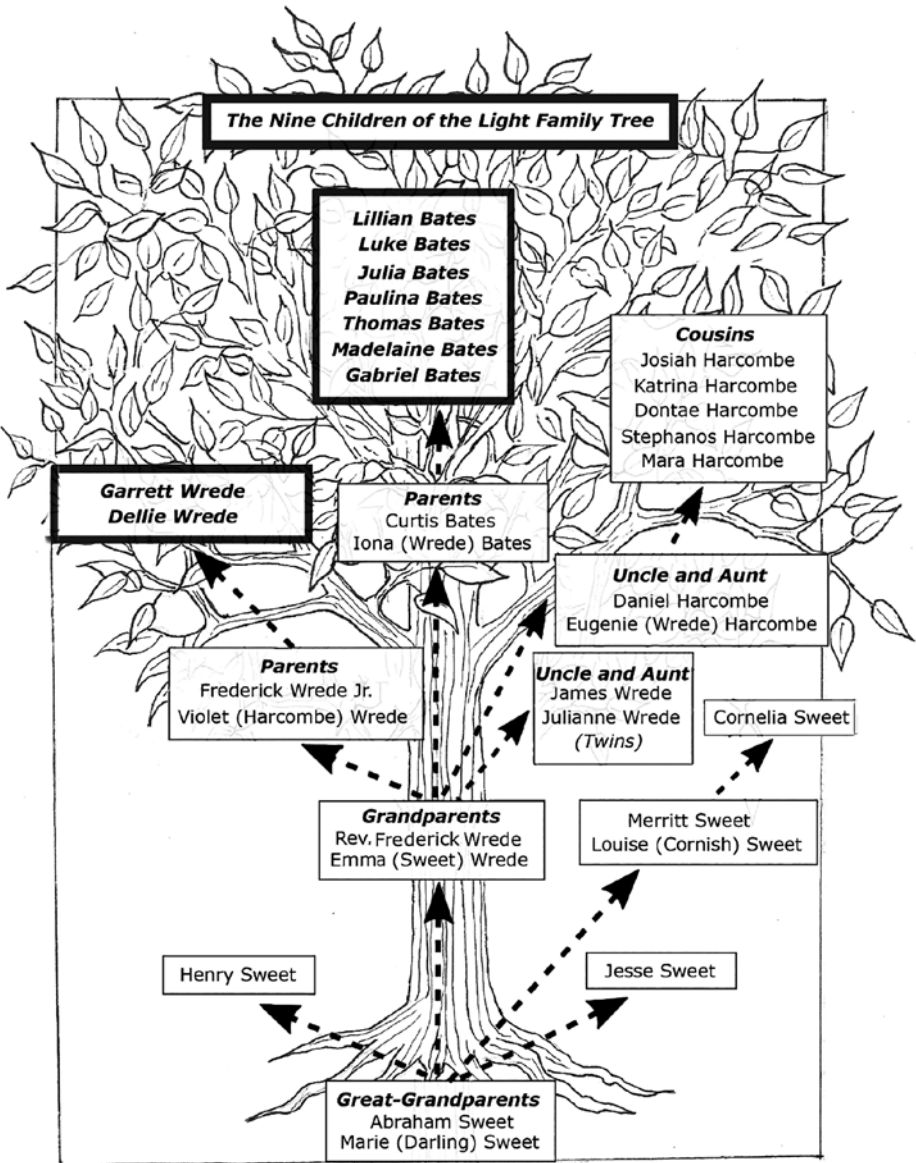
Louise (Cornish) Sweet

Henry Sweet

Jesse Sweet

Great-Grandparents

Abraham Sweet
Marie (Darling) Sweet



Contents

Acknowledgments	11
Foreword.....	13
Prologue.....	15
Chapter 1: A Missing Light.....	17
Chapter 2: Rehearsal	25
Chapter 3: Painting Pranks	36
Chapter 4: Ruined	42
Chapter 5: Cancel Christmas?.....	52
Chapter 6: Gabriel and Maddie Have a Plan.....	60
Chapter 7: Singing Lessons and Potato Soup	67
Chapter 8: Three Begin to Plot.....	73
Chapter 9: Strange Sighting.....	77
Chapter 10: Benny's Secret Life.....	82
Chapter 11: Thomas Explains.....	89
Chapter 12: A Disturbing Story	94
Chapter 13: Too Many Animals.....	100
Chapter 14: Two Matters of Concern	106
Chapter 15: Getting It Right	112
Chapter 16: Glitter from Galena.....	118
Chapter 17: Decorations and More.....	127
Chapter 18: No Baby.....	134
Chapter 19: Gwendolyn the Greeter	141
Chapter 20: Wretched Rags?	148
Chapter 21: Who Is Sitting in Our Seats?	152
Chapter 22: A Cobblestone Island Christmas Begins	156
Chapter 23: The Confused Congregation	161

Chapter 24: The Service Continues	166
Chapter 25: Escape to the Old Lighthouse.....	175
Chapter 26: A Magnificent Ending.....	183
Chapter 27: Another Miracle	193
Chapter 28: Sobbing Scarsley.....	199
Chapter 29: Two Gifts	203
Chapter 30: Songs for a Christmas Birthday	207
Mrs. Tivvy’s Symbolic Christmas Tree Ornaments.....	213
Historic Note from the Author.....	215

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A COBBLESTONE ISLAND CHRISTMAS

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Foreword

On the northernmost tip of an island in Wisconsin, seven children in one family live together at Cobblestone Lighthouse. Two visiting cousins make the group nine.

As with children everywhere, each is different and special. Each struggles. Each wishes to discover. Some are gifted with a unique ability to show joy, gentleness, meekness (kindness), goodness, and faith (faithfulness). Some need to be more loving, to find peace, and to learn longsuffering (patience) and temperance (self-control). In short, to understand God's free spiritual gifts.

Over the course of approximately a year, these nine children have learned to understand who they are as "Children of the Light." As children of lighthouse keepers in 1884-85, they long to be loved, to find acceptance, and to enjoy adventures. They also learn their importance as children of an even greater Light.

A Cobblestone Island Christmas centers around the Christmas service Mrs. Iona Bates has written for her schoolchildren at Cobblestone Lighthouse. Twins Gabriel and Madelaine, turning nine years old on Christmas Eve, add some surprises. Although imperfect as we all are, Gabriel is an example of goodness, and Madelaine is an example of meekness (kindness) to their siblings, cousins, and all those who know them. A snowy apparition on the lake and a missing red garnet, red ruby, and red tourmaline continue to pose mysteries during the Christmas preparations. However, the Christmas service itself becomes a most memorable event for the nine cousins who are guided by family, and friends, and us. This is their story.

E. C., A. C., S. C.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is
goodness, meekness (kindness)…”
(Galatians 5:22, KJV)

Prologue

*DePere Auditorium on Cobblestone Island in Lakeshore County, Wisconsin
Sunday, December 14, 1884*

It was the high point of the service when an unrehearsed “wise man” had answered the question of the night. Because most things had turned out reasonably well, the event would go down as a nearly perfect evening. Director Bates and the children could breathe a sigh of relief. Until something terrible happened. Unplanned. Unthinkable.

It was as if all the wall lamps had come to life to agree on one thing. “When we go out,” they plotted, “we’ll all go out together!” And that is what happened. The oil lamps flickered and sputtered, then died. All of them—at the same time. The entire hall suddenly plunged into darkness. Nearly one hundred helpless people sat, lost and afraid, groping about blindly to make sense of what had just happened, and whether it was part of the program.

As always, Director Bates remained calm, her head spinning as she thought of ways to fix the disaster. Her mind raced through plans A, B, and C. However, neither she nor anyone else in the auditorium had the power to reverse what had happened. They could only react. Clearly, the darkness had not been part of the plan.

Jumping immediately into action, Gwendolyn DePere showed that she had her own plan to make things right—at least for herself. Thinking first about her family, then about her special guests from Milwaukee, but mostly for the safety of her daughter, Gwendolyn’s shrill voice cried through the blackness.

“Lucinda! Lucinda!”

But Gwendolyn’s words were drowned out by the hubbub in the hall. People began to stand. Several screamed, and one helpless

A COBBLESTONE ISLAND CHRISTMAS

soul fainted. Gwendolyn thought surely someone would perish, and she had to make sure it would not be Lucinda. She flew from the back of the auditorium and approached the stage, her taffeta gown billowing up like a blowfish. Not able to see even her hand in front of her, she sped forward, and with a great *thud*, slammed straight into the stage.

Earlier, Gwendolyn had questioned Iona's idea for the children to snuff out their candles. Iona had told them that the gesture was symbolic. Gwendolyn had no use for symbolism—people were about to be trampled to death! Snuffing out the candles moments before the wall lamps sputtered to their deaths had turned Christmas pageantry into Christmas catastrophe. And Gwendolyn didn't blame herself. She blamed Iona Bates for her foolish instructions. The children's handheld candles should have remained lit! All she could think of now was to find her daughter in the dark.

Quickly rubbing her hip that had collided with the stage, Gwendolyn managed to throw herself up onto it. Legs swinging over, her body lying prone across the top, she scanned the bleakness to locate Lucinda. Then, as quickly as the light was expired, the auditorium was inspired. The change would be talked about for years.

Startled children rose to their feet as they observed in stunned silence. Gwendolyn slipped quietly off the stage and set her feet firmly upon the floor. The flailing and grasping in the congregation stopped. Most stood speechless. Heads snapped toward the north windows as everyone beheld a wondrous sight.

Chapter 1

A Missing Light

Cobblestone Island Lighthouse
Tuesday, December 2, 1884
Twelve days earlier

“Do you think a lot of people will come, Gabe?” Madelaine gazed out the tall panes of glass enclosing the fourth-order Fresnel lens in the lantern room of Cobblestone Lighthouse. Her twin brother Gabriel, sandwiched near her, was completely enthralled with the moon. She wondered whether he had heard her question.

“Maddie, the moon was so beautiful last night. I didn’t think it could look better than that.”

He hadn’t heard her.

“That’s because it’s completely full tonight. It looked full last night, but it wasn’t. It was still bulging gibbous.” Madelaine thought she’d try again. “Gabe, do you think anyone will come?”

Gabriel looked at his sister and answered with an air of confidence. “Yes, they’ll come if the weather holds out. But Mother says it might have to be moved up. I don’t think the weather will stay nice until our birthday.”

“Do you remember when we were all here for Christmas? We were pretty young, but I can remember it somewhat. Can you?”

“Yes, a little bit. We were here at Cobblestone Lighthouse for our sixth birthday. Father shut down the light on the twenty-sixth. Then we moved back to the farm. It was magical—I remember that.”

A COBBLESTONE ISLAND CHRISTMAS



“That doesn’t happen very often.”

“What doesn’t happen very often?” Curtis Bates clanked his boots on the metal steps as he climbed into the cramped space of the lantern room.

“Father,” began Madelaine without answering his question, “how often have we been on Cobblestone Island for Christmas?”

Father’s handsome smile beamed as brightly as the fixed white light shooting from the tower. “Not very often, Maddie. Most recent time was three years ago when you two turned six, and before that was when you two were just toddlers. You probably don’t remember that Christmas. Your mother surely had her hands full that year with seven children.” Father squinted as he tried to remember specifics. “Let’s see, back in 1877, the older twins would have been almost six, Paulina four, Thomas three, and Julia—”

“Was five,” calculated Maddie, “and Gabe and I would have turned two that year.”

“Indeed, which meant much pitter-patter from all your little feet below as I worked up here. I didn’t close down the light that year until January first—of ’78.”

“That late, Father, in January?” Gabriel was skeptical.

“It was warm that season. No ice. No snow.”

“This year has been so strange, Father,” Maddie commented. “You said you almost shut down the light at Thanksgiving time.”

“Yes,” agreed Gabriel, “the snowstorms were bad just before Thanksgiving, even though early November was so warm. How do you know when to shut down the light for our move back to the farm on Washburn Island?”

“It all depends on the amount of ice and snow on the lake and whether the vessels can get through. And, yes, I had thought of closing early this year.”

A MISSING LIGHT

“We were talking about Mother’s Christmas Carnival and when it will be—”

“Gabriel Merritt!” shouted his twin. “It is *not* a carnival!”

“I know that. I guess I have heard Mrs. DePere call it a show or carnival so often that her words are sticking in my brain.”

“Then un-stick them, Gabe. It is a Christmas *service*. It is meant to honor God with a Christmas message for everyone who comes. It is not a carnival to entertain.” Her words were strong but came across as more honest than harsh, and Gabriel wasn’t the least bit offended.

As Curtis Bates made some adjustments to the light, he looked down in the shadows at his youngest two. Then he looked outside. The full moon created white glowing ripples on the lake. The scene looked eerie and cold. “I think your mother is planning to tell people to come early this year. Her plans are for the twentieth or perhaps the week before. She doesn’t hold much hope for her original idea of celebrating right on Christmas Eve. Not this year.”

“It would be nice to celebrate our birthday here, Father, but it sounds like another Christmas at the farm. That is good, of course, but wouldn’t it be exciting to have Christmas here again?”

“C’mon, Gabe. We’d better go down and let Father do his job.” Madelaine had already started to descend the steps. “We just came up here to look at the full moon,” she called loudly to the keeper at work.

“It’s a beauty tonight,” agreed Curtis Bates. But as he remarked, he squinted his eyes as if in search of something out on the lake. His face had turned grave.

“Anything wrong, Father?” Gabriel asked as he turned around to walk down the steps backward. He had noticed his father’s strained expression.

But Mr. Bates seemed too absorbed looking out the glass panels. Perhaps he, too, was as enthralled with the full moon as had been his youngest son. Or perhaps it was something else he was thinking about—or searching for on the distant lake. The night was somewhat warmer than usual, the atmosphere becoming less clear with fog beginning to roll in. The full moon tried to illuminate a strange sight far in the distance that wasn’t quite recognizable through the

A COBBLESTONE ISLAND CHRISTMAS

growing haze. Keeper Bates had been told something unusual could be out on the lake. A week or so ago Luke and Garrett had called him up to the tower to show him something that had disturbed them. At first, Keeper Bates had seen nothing. He had examined the lake from the tower and had searched the area by boat but had found nothing. Keeper Bates strained to see whether what his son and nephew had described had reappeared. The matter weighed upon him because he believed the eerie scene could be real. But Luke's father saw nothing.

"No, Gabriel. Nothing seems to be wrong," he concluded.

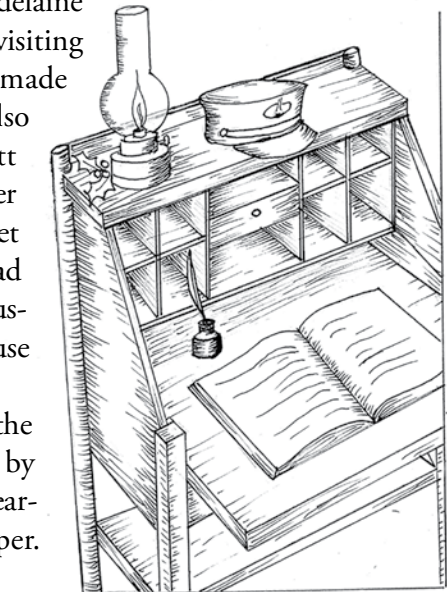
Gabriel seemed satisfied and continued his climb down from the lantern room. He failed to catch his father's soft mutter, "But I see no light from the Marble Island tower again tonight. That makes darkness there for a week now."

Gabriel and Maddie stood in the hallway at the base of the tower stairs. Straight ahead was a little alcove that housed a small desk where their father wrote daily entries in his official lighthouse log. The hallway also led to four upstairs bedrooms.

The seven Bates children slept in two of the rooms. Luke, Thomas, and Gabriel Bates stayed together in one of the rooms. Their visiting cousin Garrett made it full with four boys, ages ranging from eight to twelve.

Lillian, Julia, Paulina, and Madelaine took up another room. Their visiting cousin Florence "Dellie" Delight made this space full with five girls, ages also ranging from eight to twelve. Garrett and Dellie were brother and sister and were children of Fred and Violet Wrede of Berrie's Island. They had been staying with their seven cousins at Cobblestone Island Lighthouse since the summer.

One tiny bedroom just to the left of the lantern stairs was taken by Priscilla Rhoades, the eighteen-year-old temporary live-in housekeeper.



A MISSING LIGHT

The children's mother, Iona Bates, was busy writing and directing what was turning into a grand Christmas service for the island children who attended her school in the basement of the lighthouse. Because of this endeavor, Priscilla was pitching in by doing more chores than usual. This young woman lived with her family in a community of several other African-American families on nearby Washburn Island, and she often came to help the Bates family with household duties as needed. Priscilla had even suggested to Iona that her little brother Leonard and little sister Hadassah take part in the upcoming Christmas service if she didn't mind that they wouldn't be able to make every rehearsal. The two young ones could come across on the ferry from Washburn Island with Kari Hansen, Lillian's best friend, who was also participating in the service. Iona agreed.

Following Thanksgiving, however, she had stayed day and night to help Mrs. Bates with housework and cooking. Although stern at times, the children loved Priscilla because she treated them fairly and with kind discipline. The fact that she looked different from them made no difference to members of the Bates and Wrede families. To a person, they all loved the capable young woman. In sharp contrast, some residents of Village Galena, a mile away at the southern end of Cobblestone Island, thought less favorably of her. They failed to see her beauty, inside as well as out.

The fourth and tiniest bedroom at the top landing of the stairway that led from the main floor to the upstairs was reserved for occasional visitors, especially the lighthouse inspector. Each bedroom had a closet, which was a rarity among houses in 1884 because most could not afford the extra taxes imposed on these additional "rooms." To save money, wardrobes were used to store clothing. Since government-appointed lighthouse keepers paid no taxes, members of the Bates family enjoyed the luxury of closets in every room at Cobblestone Lighthouse.

Madelaine and Gabriel Bates were the caboose twins in the Bates family, the engine twins being Lillian and Luke, twelve years of age. The girls in both sets of twins had been born first. But only by minutes. Lillian made sure everyone knew she was the oldest of the seven, and the one to be respected. Madelaine, on the other hand,

A COBBLESTONE ISLAND CHRISTMAS

ignored that she was minutes older than Gabriel; such an idea wasn't important to her mild and non-competitive nature.

Along with his brother Luke and cousin Garrett, Gabriel enjoyed the privilege of being known as one of "the boys." Gabriel loved adventure and was not bothersome when he tagged along with the older two boys. Gabriel had a good heart and never seemed to cause problems, which was in direct contrast to his nine-year-old brother, Thomas, who was not considered one of "the boys." Thomas was perceived as a "know-it-all," and one who didn't even enjoy the outdoor pursuits that his siblings appreciated. Thomas lived in his own world and was content with that arrangement, although at times he found it necessary to drag a brother or sister in on one of his clever ideas.

"Gabe," Maddie began as she stood at the base of the steps before heading off to her room, "we'll have to work some more on our special project, tomorrow. Don't tell Paulina and Dellie what we're up to. They might not like that we are planning an art project, because that is what they like to do. Let's keep it a surprise for as long as we can. Wasn't it wonderful for cousin Stephanos to suggest this idea when he visited for our early Thanksgiving celebration?" Madelaine referred to another one of their cousins, a most musically gifted one, who had recently visited them from their lighthouse on the mainland peninsula.

"Shhh, here come the artists now! Don't say a word." Their sister Paulina, and same-aged cousin, Dellie, had the firm reputation among the nine as being the most creative in the group. The two were always working on some artistic attempt, be it drawing, coloring, painting, or designing. But they weren't the only ones in the family with talent, even though they liked the others to think that was the case.

"What are *you* two up to?" questioned Paulina, already in her nightgown. "Why aren't you ready for bed, Maddie?" Paulina didn't like the thought that her eight-year-old little sister might get to stay up later than herself.

"We were just in the lantern room talking to Father. I'm off to bed where I'll review in my head our poetry assignment for school.

A MISSING LIGHT

And so is Gabriel. Mother certainly has been giving us a lot of homework these days.”

“Yes, and all those songs to learn for the Christmas gala—”

“Gabriel!” Maddie pounded him with another stern but kind-spirited reminder.

“I mean, service!” Gabriel corrected himself, satisfying Maddie for the time being. Again, he wasn’t upset by the reminder, and he even loved her for it. She was his twin and too lovely to despise. Maddie was Maddie, a thoughtful girl whom everyone found easy to love.

“I think Maddie is up to something,” observed Dellie who stood in the hall, also clad in her nightgown, ready for bed.

“We’ll have to keep our eye on her—and on Gabriel too. I have a feeling we’re not the only two making plans for Christmas Eve!”

“And why not, Paulina? Christmas Eve is special. And especially for those two. It’s their birthday.”

With a giggle and a smile, Paulina challenged her cousin to a race to see who could get into bed the fastest. But Paulina was beaten easily, which made her want to change the rules, so she could win.

“No, wait!” she retracted her words as she sat atop the bed beside Dellie already snugly inside. She feigned a faraway look as if trying to redo the rules of the game. “What I meant was, the winner is whoever can get to bed the *slowest!*” She reached toward the foot of the bed and grabbed a second covering. She pulled it closer and proclaimed cunningly, “Yes, indeed, the winner is the *slowest* one to bed.” She spread the large, quilted material over them and continued to explain, “Because the *slowest* one gets to cover us both with Grandmother Marie’s warm quilt.” Lying down, she turned toward Dellie and smiled. “Which is *me, I* won!” She turned herself over to snuggle into a cozy sleep.

“You’re just like Lillian,” Dellie yawned. “You always have to win.” But she said it with a smile because she knew Paulina was working hard to become less irritated with others when things didn’t always go her way. “Now *you* wait,” Dellie suddenly sat up with an idea. “Maddie isn’t here yet. *She’ll* be the last one to bed, so *she’ll* be the true winner.” Paulina groaned as she punched her pillow in

A COBBLESTONE ISLAND CHRISTMAS

a playful way, managing to smile back at how her little game had backfired.

Maddie entered the room, grabbed her nightgown from the closet, changed into it, and crawled into bed next to her sister and cousin. She had no idea what game she was playing when Paulina and Dellie sat up and yelled, “*YOU* win!”

“Sleep fast,” Maddie, somewhat confused, ordered back. “Tomorrow is *not* going to be an easy day for any of us.”