

Daughters of the  
Summer Storm

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First Edition: 1979 by Fawcett Gold Medal  
Books, a division of CBS

Second Edition: 1999 by E-Reads

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# Chapter One

Charleston, S.C.  
September, 1831

No one stirred in the Charleston townhouse that faced the battery. It was the hottest part of the afternoon, and even the sea breeze had deserted the city. Marigold, seated in the gazebo at the end of the enclosed garden, impatiently brushed away the fly that lit on her ecru-colored dress.

If only their house guests would leave. Because of them, Marigold had not been able to meet Shaun at the battery as she usually did. And she had no way to send word to him. It was all she could do to avoid her cousin, Crane, who was determined to court her.

On impulse, she stood up, her tawny eyes seeking the distant seawall that separated the ocean from land. What if Shaun were waiting for her at that very moment?

She stepped from the gazebo and hurried toward the side gate. But just as her hand reached to push the gate open, a voice behind her inquired, "You are going somewhere, *ma petite*, without a parasol to cover your head?"

Filled with disappointment at being caught, Marigold gazed into the wrinkled face of the black servant, Feena. "I...I was going...I was... Oh, drat it, Feena. Why do you have to pop up every time I try to leave the house? Has my father asked you to watch me every minute of the day?"

"*Oui.*"

"I suspected as much," Marigold said. She retraced her steps toward the gazebo with the servant at her side. As she glared at Feena, Marigold's petulant expression changed. The white-haired old woman looked tired.

"Go and take a nap, Fenna. It's much too hot for you to be chasing after me."

When Feena opened her mouth to protest, Marigold said, "I'll be in my bed for the next hour. I promise. You'd better take advantage," she urged. "It's probably the last time I shall make such a promise."

Feena stared at the golden-haired girl and then, taking her at her word, turned to walk along the pathway to the carriage house and the servants' quarters.

Marigold tiptoed into the upstairs bedroom that she shared with her dark-haired twin, Maranta. No sound came from the other bed. Maranta was asleep, with her small foot dangling outside the netting—vulnerable to the stray mosquito that buzzed about the room.

Marigold walked to the bed and covered the foot with the thinly woven drapery. For a moment, she stood, frowning down at her meek, circumspect twin. It made sense for the Condessa Louisa, their important houseguest, to take a liking to Maranta. But if Maranta had any sense at all, she would not encourage a friendship with the elderly Portuguese dowager. Far better for the girl to keep her distance, or she might find herself whisked off to the other end of the world.

Marigold made a face, remembering her first - encounter with the woman and her companion,

Dona Isobel .She couldn't have made a very good impression on the visitors, having made no effort to conceal her instant dislike for both of them. But Marigold didn't care what the women thought of her. She was too busy thinking of Shaun.

While she walked to the other tester bed, she unbuttoned her afternoon dress. She let it slip to the floor. And kicking off her soft kid slippers, she climbed under the protective mosquito netting.

Frustrated, Marigold punched at the feather pillow before she laid her head against it. She felt angry and disconcerted. To think that her father had forced Feena to spy on her. Did he imagine the old servant could keep her from seeing Shaun?

Perspiration began to form on her forehead and, in a pique at the uncompromising heat, she pitched the pillow from the bed and removed her petticoats and camisole. Now more comfortable, Marigold closed her eyes and went to sleep.

The next afternoon, Marigold sat in the carriage beside Maranta.

Only two more days and they would be eighteen. September's children—that's what they'd always been called. The twins were as opposite in temperament as the day that had given them birth—the dark, calm serenity of early morning, shattered by the restless winds

of the spawning hurricane.

Marigold's mind was also restless as they traveled down the cobblestoned street to Mrs. Windom's shop to be fitted for their birthday dresses. A plan to see Shaun again began to form in Marigold's mind. He would not be pleased to see her at the railway station, but that couldn't be helped. Marigold glanced at Feena and then quickly lowered her parasol to hide the mutinous gleam in her eye.

The carriage came to a stop under a shade tree in front of Mrs. Windom's shop. "Do not take too long," Feena admonished. "We must be back in time for your little brother's christening."

"Are you coming in with us?" Maranta asked.

Feena shook her head. "It is more pleasant to wait in the shade. Now, run along and do not waste time."

Marigold said nothing as she and Maranta stepped down from the carriage and walked through the front door of the shop.

At first, the shop appeared to be deserted. The sound of voices from one of the dressing rooms, however, corrected that illusion. Maranta started to speak, but Marigold held her finger to her lips. She walked to the back of the shop, unlatched the door, and motioned for her dark-haired sister to follow.

Maranta, puzzled at Marigold's action, didn't move.

"Hurry up, Maranta," she whispered. "We



don't have all day." Marigold reached out to push Maranta through the door.

"Where are we going, Marigold?"

"We are going to the railway station—to see Shaun."

"No, Marigold. Feena will get suspicious and come inside to look for us."

"We'll be back before she's worried, if you'll only hurry."

"But what about Papa?"

"Are you going to be a frightened ninny all your life, Maranta? You know *I'll* be the one he punishes if he finds out. You're too much like Maman for Papa to ever be mad at you." Marigold gave her sister a final push and softly closed the door to Mrs. Windom's shop behind them.

Reluctantly, Maranta followed her headstrong sister in the direction of Line Street and the railway station. She couldn't understand how Marigold dared to deliberately disobey their father. What if he should catch them where they had no business, unchaperoned? Maranta shuddered, just thinking about it.

The familiar sights and sounds of Charleston went unnoticed and unsavored as Maranta followed her sister past Calhoun Street and Vanderhorst, on past Radcliffe and Spring, until they reached their destination.

The noisy locomotive belched black smoke into the air, while it gathered steam to start on its journey. Bales of cotton had been loaded on

a barrier car to protect the passengers from the stray sparks and flames spewing from the engine. And the pine knots to be used as torches to light the way home to Charleston that evening were neatly stack in one corner of the shiny new locomotive.

Relieved that the train was still in the station, Marigold left Maranta outside to keep watch while she slipped into the station house. The golden-haired girl hesitated, her eyes searching for Shaun Banagher.

Although his back was to her , there was no mistaking him. His height alone would single him out from the rest, without the proud tilt to his head.

Almost as if sensing eyes upon him, the tall, well-built young man turned. "Marigold," he said in surprise, taking a step toward her. "What are you doing here?"

"I had to see you, Shaun."

He glanced toward the passenger door and quickly ushered the girl into the stationmaster's empty office.

"What's so important that you risked coming here alone?" he asked, his voice filled with disapproval.

"Maranta is with me," she assured him. "She's waiting outside."

Ignoring his frown, the girl rushed on. "Oh, Shaun. Papa is in an awful temper. He found out that I've been meeting you at the battery. And now he has threatened to marry me off to

the first dandy who offers for me."

The man laughed and tenderly smoothed an errant curl that peeked from under the girl's silk bonnet.

"You're just being dramatic, Marigold—as usual."

The girls' tawny eyes clouded. "Then you don't care if I...marry someone else?" she whispered.

The smile disappeared and Shaun's voice changed. "You will marry no one but me, Marigold. But I won't go to your father ; penniless. In a few months..."

"A few months," she repeated, interrupting. "By then, it will be too late. If you really love me, you'll..."

The noise of the clanging bell muffled her voice. The man gazed out the window at the locomotive and back to the girl. "Marigold, I have to go. The train is ready to leave."

"Then, goodbye, Shaun," she said, turning her face from him.

She felt his arms tighten around her while his angry green eyes explored her piquant face.

"Just what do you mean that?" he asked.

"I shan't see you again, Shaun. There evidently is no hope for us."

His kiss brushed away the trembling of her lips, and Shaun groaned with the sudden flaring of passion.

Outside the station house, Marigold's twin, Maranta, sat on the wooden bench, her face

partially hidden under the ruffled parasol that shaded her alabaster complexion from the fierce September sun. With each hiss of the locomotive building up steam, Maranta gave a start.

Her troubled, dark satin eyes , looking for Marigold, glanced anxiously at the station door and then back toward the street. Why didn't Marigold hurry? It was almost past time for them to be at the house where the family was waiting.

The longer she sat, the more uncomfortable she became. The heat caused little rivulets of moisture to gather between her breasts and she could feel the wetness trickling down her blue afternoon dress. Yet, there was nothing she could do except ignore both the heat and her thirst. She lowered the parasol closer to her face, shutting out everything but the view of the station door, and began to pray silently. "Please, Marigold. Please come before it's too late.

"Just as I suspected," the angry voice exploded, breaking into her thoughts and causing the young girl to jump. She looked up and saw the stormy eyes of her father, Robert Tabor.

"P-Papa," she stammered, hastily removing herself from the wooden bench.

"Go to the carriage, Maranta. I will deal with you later."

His stern tone frightened her, but her fear

was more for Marigold than for herself. Marnta hesitated and then spoke, her own voice little more than a whisper over the noisy locomotive.

"Don't be...too hard on Marigold, Papa. She...loves him, Papa."

"That is no excuse for your behavior, coming unchaperoned to the rail station."

"Yes, Papa." She stood for a moment, watching her father's back as he disappeared into the station. And then she slowly walked to the family carriage and, climbing into the hooded vehicle, was thankful to be safe from curious eyes.

The black woman, Feena, sat on the seat with the driver. She wouldn't look at Maranta. Instead, she grumbled to herself to indicate her annoyance at the trick the girls had played on her.

"I'm sorry, Feena," Maanta apologized.

But the old woman pretended not to hear her. She kept her head turned from the girl and watched the locomotive with an exaggerated interest.

Poor Marigold. Why did she constantly court trouble by not only seeking out the man she had been forbidden to see again, but by staying far too long? Feena was bound to suspect something while she waited outside the dress shop for such a long time.

Fearfully, Maranta turned toward the station. And then she saw them. Her father, with his slight limp breaking his long stride into an irregular gait, and Marigold walking beside him, her face set in an almost identical stubborn expression, her golden hair a brighter, burnished version of the man's. Robert Tabor handed Marigold into the carriage and the driver, waiting for them to be seated, started the horses away from Line Street at Robert's nod

and headed toward the townhouse that faced the Charleston battery.

"Are you going to tell Maman?" Marigold asked, slightly uneasy.

"Not until after the christening," he replied. "I don't want to spoil the day for your mother."

Marigold relaxed at his words and cast a relieved glance at Maranta. Once again, Robert Tabor's overwhelming love for his French Creole wife, Eulalie had postponed immediate chastisement. And later, he would have cooled down enough, so that Marigold's punishment would not be too severe, or so she thought.

The horses' hooves on the cobbled streets were the only noise of the early afternoon. In the silence that enveloped the carriage, Marigold gave herself up to thinking about Shaun. A softness crept over her face as her fingers, going to her mouth, touched the delicate spot that still tingled from the feel of Shaun's lips upon hers.

At the sight of the large Palladian-design house at the end of the street, the driver slowed the carriage and brought it to a stop before the door of the two-and-a-half story white frame house sitting majestically on its high basement.

"Take the girls up the back stairs, Feena, while I go in the front," Robert ordered the black woman. "And see that they are presentable as quickly as possible."

"Yes, Monsieur Robert," Feena replied, her dark eyes still showing her consternation at

their afternoon prank.

Robert hurriedly handed down each girl from the carriage and watched them disappear through the side gate. Lightly touching the ornamental iron railing that he had added a few years previously to the house, he climbed the sweeping front steps.

He had been lucky to acquire the larger house when Robbie had been born, since they had outgrown the one on Tradd Street. But it was becoming increasingly expensive to keep up two houses—Midgard, the plantation house, and this one in town—especially with the declining price of cotton.

Robert paused and, scowling, looked out toward the sea and the brilliant blue sky before he went through the front door that the servant held open for him. A tender look replaced his frown at the sight of his wife Eulalie walking toward him with the baby in her arms.

Maranta and Marigold, careful to make as little noise as possible, dashed up the back stairs. Feena was directly behind them, puffing from the exertion of the hot afternoon.

"There will be no time for a tub bath, a sour-faced Feena informed them. "Sponge off quickly and I will help you into your dresses." Anxious to forget the unpleasant episode, Maranta rushed to the basin on her side of the room. She drank a glass of water and then poured the rest of the liquid from the pitcher

into the earthenware bowl, dipping her fingers into the cool water to splash on her face.

Maranta and Marigold, in their camisoles and pantalettes, waited for Feena to lace them into their tight corsets. The old woman was still mad. Marigold could tell from the way she drew the strings together and tied them. But Marigold said nothing. She stood still while Feena helped Maranta into her yellow silk dress. And then Marigold felt her own pale green crepe sliding over her golden curls.

When the dresses were in place and buttoned, Feena left them so she might get ready herself; for the old servant was not about to miss the christening of the latest Tabor infant because of the twins' antics.

In silence, Maranta and Marigold brushed their hair, and with a last glimpse in the mirror, they hurried from the bedroom. Side by side they walked down the hall to the formal parlor where everyone had gathered.

"To think—we'll soon be eighteen, and Maman and Papa are still having babies," Marigold whispered to Maranta in disgust. "You would think Papa would know better by now and leave Maman alone."

"Marigold," Maranta reprimanded. "Babies come from God, and I...I'm happy that he has blessed Maman and Papa with another child."

"Oh, Maranta, you are so naive. Maman is thirty-eight years old—*thirty-eight*. Most of my friends' mothers don't even *sleep* with their



husbands, much less make babies with them."

At Marigold's words, Maranta's dark eyes widened in her gentle, small face. "Please, Souci," Maranta whispered, reverting to her sister's pet name. "S-someone might hear you. We're in enough trouble already."

The door to the parlor opened, and Arthur Metcalfe, their father's best friend, quickly drew them inside. "I thought I heard your voices," he greeted the twins, taking each under his arm to lead them into the room. And not a moment too soon; for everyone was assembled and waiting, even their little brother Robbie stood patiently in his place. Maranta and her sister had only time to curtsy briefly to the guests, before the priest, in his robes, beckoned them to come forward.

It had been decided to have the christening at home rather than at the church so that the baby, Raven, would not risk being exposed to the fever that was beginning to spread once more throughout the city.

Marigold watched while Arthur leaned over and took the sleeping child from Eulalie's arms. The man stared down at the baby, and then he looked toward Eulalie with love and pain undisguised in his soft, blue eyes. Suddenly, Marigold's own eyes widened. Why, Uncle

Arthur was in love with her maman! But Arthur's eyes became hooded in an instant, hiding the pain, while he carried the baby toward the priest, with Maranta and Marigold,

the baby's godmothers, at his side.

Silently, Marigold stood, hearing little of the rites. Her mind spun again with the sudden revelation. All these years—Uncle Arthur—loving her mother. Was that why he had never married?

Marigold looked at her father and then back to Arthur. Gentle, kindhearted Arthur had never been a match for Robert Tabor, she knew. Robert Tabor had only to reach out for what he wanted; he was never denied. And losing something he had acquired was completely foreign to him.

So now, Arthur had to be content with holding the dark-haired baby in the white christening gown, and promising to be responsible, as a godfather, for the son of the woman he loved.

Marigold dismissed the twinge of pity for Arthur. Her mind went to Shaun, instead—*her* Shaun now, if what she was planning worked out. For almost a year, Shaun had labored long hours, going without decent clothes and other necessities, saving every penny for the day when he and Marigold could be married. But she knew that time had run out. They could afford to wait no longer while Shaun accumulated more money. Her father's threat to find a husband for her—someone other than Shan Banagher—was uppermost in her mind.

The girl's chin lifted in an unobserved challenge. For once, Robert Tabor would not

have his way, she decided.

"...Lyle Ravenal Tabor, child of the covenant..." the priest intoned, bringing Marigold's mind back to the ceremony taking place.

Maranta, standing on the other side of the baby, looked happily into her new little brother's face. He had the same dark coloring she and her mother had.

When the ceremony was over, Robert Tabor stepped forward and claimed his son from Arthur's arms. His fierce, possessive look encompassed not only his youngest child, but Eulalie, his wife, as well. And Maranta, seeing it, remembered what Marigold had said on their way to the parlor.

Unexpectedly, Maranta shivered. Although she loved her father, even *he* frightened her. But she was glad that she would never have to submit to any man. In two days' time, she would be eighteen, and on her birthday, she planned to ask permission to enter the convent.