

Swept into Destiny

CATHERINE ULRICH BRAKEFIELD



ST JOSEPH, MISSOURI USA

SWEPT INTO DESTINY

Copyright © 2017 Catherine Ulrich Brakefield

PRINT ISBN: 978-1936501-39-7

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without written permission of the publisher. Published by CrossRiver Media Group, P.O. Box 187, Brewster, Kansas 67732. www.crossrivermedia.com

Scripture quotations from the King James Version, public domain.

Any webpage addresses or phone numbers used throughout this book are offered as a resource to the reader. These websites are not intended in any way to be or imply an endorsement on the part of CrossRiver Media Group or this book's compilers, nor do we vouch for their content or accuracy for the life of this book.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, places, characters and incidents are either products of the author's imagination or used fictitiously. Any similarity to actual people, organizations or events is coincidental.

For more information on Catherine Ulrich Brakefield, please visit —
CatherineUlrichBrakefield.com

Editor: Debra L. Butterfield

Cover Art: Woman: © Captblack76 | Dreamstime.com Background: © Jocrebbin | Dreamstime.com

Printed in the United States of America.

To my grandmother who showed throughout
her life, faith and fortitude.
To my mother for her courage and confidence in me.
And to my husband who rejoices with me
each time a book is complete!

I can still hear Gran's voice vibrating
through the hillside of Camp Beauregard,
telling of God-fearing men and divided loyalties
— to the everyday patriot, this novel is dedicated to you...

Acknowledgments

To recall all those people who encouraged me to keep this dream alive of this four book series, would be impossible for me to list. My dear family, immediate and distant, is at the top of the list as is *CrossRiver Media Group*.

Debra L. Butterfield's style of editing is thorough and encouraging. Her dedication to her career ensures the excellence of a finished product and brings out the best in my writing. I am very blessed to call you my editor!

Deep gratitude goes to my publisher, *Tamara Clymer*, for her encouragement and dogmatic pursuit for quality. From her layouts to this creative and fantastic book cover. You are an inspiration and truly the best!

Many thanks go to my agent, *Cyle Young* of Hartline Literary Agency, for his incomparable support, enduring confidence, and encouragement in me.

Words are often inadequate; however, God's blessings never fail. May God bless you one and all: *Jane Kirkpatrick*, *Cheryl Wyatt*, *Marcia (Mitchell) Lee*, and *Deborah Malone* for taking time from your busy schedule to review *Swept into Destiny*!

Thank you *Brennan LeQuire*, Librarian of the Bount County Public Library, for helping me acquire the research materials I desired. Your expertise helped me in my many hours of delving into the archives of the history of Maryville, about Mr. Greatheart, and the abolitionist movement. Thank you *Yosef Addis* for taking time out of your busy schedule to give me a tour of Maryville's College. To the Historical

CATHERINE ULRICH BRAKEFIELD

Society of Maryville for opening their doors to me about your wonderful history, especially the Cades Cove Museum, Coal Creek Miners, and the inception of the Smokey Mountain Park.

My utmost respect and appreciation to the people of *Broadway United Methodist Church* for their warmth, shared knowledge, and hospitality.

My husband's and my trips to Springfield, Illinois, where Lincoln lived during his adult life, Washington D.C., the Pennsylvania hills of Gettysburg, the Smoky Mountains, Frankfort and Lexington, Kentucky, equipped me with the scenery of imagination you find in *Swept into Destiny*. Ireland's unique countryside of County Cork and County Limerick and meeting its beloved people helped me with the dialect. My *grandmother* and *mother* inspired my research and this unique story about the Irish immigrants and their role in the Civil War.

I thank my husband, *Edward Brakefield*, for his tireless energy in accompanying me across the byways and highways, seeking the facts about our history and our ancestors. My daughter, *Kimberly Ann*, her input and recommendations for this novel, my son, *Derek*, for his encouragement and proofreading skills, my grandchildren, *Zander*, *Logan*, and *Annabelle*, for giving me the inspiration to write America's history one truth at a time.

Most importantly I thank *you*, my readers. You are the wind beneath my wings, my inspiration to climb new heights along life's highway. I pray *Swept into Destiny* will entertain, encourage, and equip you knowing that with God's invisible hand orchestrating our American history, we cannot lose.

To *God* and to our loving Savior, *Jesus Christ*, goes the glory. Who through His mercy forgave a sinful nation, binding up our wounds and making this nation the greatest nation on earth. To this and future generations goes the challenge to keep America a God-fearing nation! God Bless.

Chapter 1

As the sun's golden beams peeked above the horizon, Maggie Gatlan strained to see past the early morning mist. She rested back into her saddle; no one was up. Good.

As a mother would her babe, deep forests, majestic mountains, and lush grasslands cradled the plantation's two-story brick mansion known as Spirit Wind Manor. What evil ensnared Maggie's beloved Tennesseans that she must conceal her actions from them? Only Mother understood Maggie's passion, her desire to understand her purpose in life.

The serene beauty of the Smokies that her mother's people, the Cherokee, called "Land of Blue Smoke" enveloped her. Nothing could change this surreal picture but the sad neglect of God's conscience. Not the abolitionist John Brown or Abraham Lincoln's new Republic, not even Mr. Reynolds, Spirit Wind's overseer. She shivered as she recalled his eyes trailing her form like a hungry wolfhound.

"Help!" came a voice in the distance.

Had a student gotten lost in the marshlands? Galloping down the hill, she reined up her horse before the inky black waters of the swamp. The branches of the trees rattled and swayed to the promptings of the wind, causing an eerie groan, as if the trees were aware of their fate in their soon-to-be-liquid grave. They lifted their burdened limbs cloaked with spider webs floating like ghosts on a pirate ship toward her in a morbid hello. She shivered. Where was her courage when she needed it?

"Here I be!"

She urged her mare forward, searching the shadowed darkness. Her horse's hooves sank ankle deep into the mire. She spotted a man covered with mud and slime, clutching a moss-covered log. Only his head and shoulders were visible; swamp water covered the rest of his body like a black coffin. The nauseous odor of rotten eggs saturated the air. She swatted at the mosquitoes swarming her head. "I'll send someone—"

"Miss, I be in a bad way."

A stranger of no consequence to her. She glanced up the hill. The Glenn was a half a mile away. One conscionable act had led to this consequence.

"Miss, please?"

She dismounted. The slurping noise of her boots chilled her ears, and she sank deeper into the muck until she could no longer see the tops. As she neared the man, she held out the end of her riding crop toward him. "Take a hold, sir."

"Saints be praised." He stretched out his arm, his blackened fingers just five inches from the stick. "I, I can't reach it... my body... won't move. Help!" Like a drowning man, he reached for her. She made a desperate lunge. His head sank and disappeared into the murky water. Seconds later, he came up gasping, clawing at the log.

Jesus help us. The inky waters swirled about her knees. Then her left riding boot wouldn't budge. Grabbing onto a web-covered limb, she inched her foot out. The ill-fated boot was instantly lost and her skirt was sucked down like a bucket in a deep well. "Ow!"

"What?" Strong hands grabbed her waist. A large man swept her into his embrace with ease, his eyes gleaming into hers with amusement. "What is a dandified lady like you doing in the swamp?"

A dirty red bandana wrapped his forehead, and curly black hair covered his head. This was not the time to be chivalrous and he was hardly the man to offer it. His close-clipped black mustache curled about dimpled cheeks and there was a glint of amused contempt in his black eyes.

"I live here. Now unhand me. This poor man needs your attention."

Dark of face, swarthy as a pirate, his hot glare swept her face like fire. "I think you're hardly wearin' the right clothes to be livin' here."

Before she could reply, five men swarmed her like a passel of angry

SWEPT INTO DESTINY

bees. "Where'd she come from?"

"She lives here," retorted the man whose arms she occupied.

"I don't mean that literally, you foolish man!"

The six ill-tempered men glared back at her. "What'd you do to him?" Without waiting for a reply, they hoisted the man out of the muck, up on their shoulders, and carried him toward drier land.

"How dare you. I heard his cry for help and rode as fast as I could. I thought of leaving... but stayed. I deserve your praise. Not condemnation."

"You? Help the likes of us?" His bold eyes stared at her. She coughed, covered her nose, then pushed with all her strength with her other hand against his chest. The smell of him was enough to gag her.

She felt his hand supporting her back drop away. She clutched his neck, her wet riding gloves scrambling for a better hold. She glanced down at the rancid waters, then up at him. His sweat-stained shirt clung to his sinewy chest in moist folds. She shuddered.

"Here is a difficult decision for you, to be sure. To accept my help or to remain in your swamp? What will it be?"

He was dirty and ragged, but, despite his dishabille, his eyes were as bold and black as a swashbuckler's.

"Matthew's snake bit," a man yelled. "Get out of there, Benjamin."

Her rescuer's powerful legs made a slurping noise in the quagmire.

"Wait, my boot."

He ignored her plea.

Maggie beat against his chest. What was he made of, granite? "I need my boot. Unhand me you nasty vagrant! And let me grab my—"

"Vagrant? We're Irish, fresh off the *Dunbrody*."

"That decrepit ship? Then you are pirates, here to pilfer Spirit Wind. Admit it."

"We like to keep our business to ourselves."

"Enough of that." A man on the bank swiped the air with his mud-caked arm. "Quit sparking her and get out of there before you both get bit!"

"Sparking?" With one stroke of his massive arms, the Irishman swept Maggie over his shoulder as neatly as a bag of oats.

"I've heard about you ruffians. How dare you touch me with your

filthy hands. You think I want your ghastly smell on my clothing?" Kicking her feet, her booted foot hit him hard in his leg.

"Ouch! The lass's toes are as rock hard as her head." The man's large hand spanked her.

"How dare you!"

"Don't you drop her, Benjamin. No namesake of mine will ever harm a—"

"Drop me?" Maggie peered around Ben's back. Seeing the Irishmen upside down, it was hard to focus, but she got enough of an eyeful to notice Ben's father's broken white teeth smiling back at her.

Ben's dad laughed. "She's a bit high and mighty, maybe you ought to throw her back. Seeing how she lives here and all."

"Why you bag of rags you call men, I'll have you know I am the daughter of the owner of the property you have so rudely littered with your presence."

"I believe she's been damaged by this place." Ben swatted her rump again. "She's got spunk, though she be ugly as sin what with her face red and swollen with mosquito bites."

Coming to consciousness, the snakebitten man groaned.

"Three snake bites. And a passel of leeches sucking what life be left from him," Ben's father muttered.

The back of Maggie's head hit the ground first. Ben ran toward the prostrate Matthew. She rubbed her head. The man had the manners of a hoodlum. Blowing a tendril of hair from her eyes, she set her chin, determined to retrieve her boot. "Ouch." She pulled out an inch-long pine needle from her toe, then glanced up at the lone pine tree. "This is your fault." Hopping on one foot, she proceeded toward the swamp.

"Ben, check the lass for leeches."

Is he referring to me? She glanced back. "Oh, no..." She slapped his extended hand and aimed a calculated palm to his cheek. He ducked, then laughed as he hauled her up into his grasp and carried her up the hill tucked beneath his arm.

Off went her boot and stockings; up went her skirts and pantalets. "How dare you!"

SWEPT INTO DESTINY

He ran his dirty hands up her ankles. "Got him."

She gasped in horror. Lodged just beneath the fleshy part of her knee, a large black bloodsucker had latched onto her leg. She shuddered.

The groans of the snakebitten Matthew floated like the mist toward her. She bit back her scream. Just how many of these bloodthirsty leeches did he have on him?

Ben's father knelt next to her, a pocketknife in one hand and the stub of a dirty cigar between his lips. The smoke encircled his head like a wreath; all she could see clearly were his deep green-blue eyes.

"Be of good courage." His gentle words consoled her.

Jesus, let him be as merciful as You.

Maggie had heard stories how the New York Irish would rob you in your bed, then cut your throat and drink your blood. For the first time, she realized the true gravity of her situation. She was outnumbered and totally at the mercy of these pirates.

The man lowered the blade of his knife, the cold steel touching her flesh. She bit down on her bottom lip.

"Get this stogie from my mouth and touch it to that bloodsucker, Ben."

Resting on her elbows, she dug her nails into the soft dirt and scowled at him.

Ben grimaced. "What if I burn her?"

"Do your best just to burn the leech, and don't leave his tentacles in her flesh, could be it might start a bad infection."

Streaks of sweat broke through Ben's hairline. Maggie closed her eyes. She opened them only to see another leech, smaller than the first, but getting larger by the second... on her blood.

They began the procedure again. She felt faint.

The man with the snakebites groaned. No telling if he'd live or die, with snakebites and these blood suckers. What a fuss she was making over a couple of leeches.

The second one dislodged, Maggie covered her calves and flopped back onto the ground. Only the ordeal wasn't over.

Ben leaned over her, a whiff of his foul breath whisking past her nostrils before his lips reached her ear. "I've got to check you again. I

don't like this any more than you do."

She shoved him aside and rose to a sitting position. "Really? Do I have your word on that, you filthy Irishman?"

"This is a difficult task to be sure." Ben's eyes gleamed into hers. His voice was soft, but there was a vibrant note in it. "I'm... attempting hard to be objective, but I find myself... wishing it weren't the nasty job of dislodging these ugly suckers. I'm thinking you should find another place to take up residence."

She gritted her teeth, ignoring the callused fingers of this stranger running up and down her calves. Her arms were shaking from the exertion of keeping her upper body in a semi-sitting position.

After his inspection, there was only concern for her written in the deep crevices of his downturned lips and the droop of his shoulders. "There's two more on the back of both her legs just below her knees."

"Well, you know what we gotta do, son."

Maggie rolled over on her stomach. The cold blade against her hot, moist calf sent a shiver through her body. The smell of smoke, burning worms, sweat, and swamp water penetrated the sultry air that promised a hot June day. "Ahhhh. Mary, Joseph, and the Saints... Jesus help me!" the snakebitten Matthew cried.

She had never heard such pain uttered from a man's lips before.

Ben's dad rested back on his knees, and wiped his forehead. "I think we've got them all. Let's see how Matthew's comin'."

"I'll leave you to... um, you know." Ben turned her over. His mouth contorted, suppressing a grin.

She gasped. Her riding skirt was tangled around her knees; her knickers had been pushed up, too, and her stockings lay in a heap on the grass, exposing her bare toes and white skin against the green of the grass.

"I have never saw the likes before." His finger touched the dimple in her knee. "Dove-white and they even feel as soft as a dove's underbelly—"

Her open palm whacking his cheek echoed across the hillside. She covered her legs and, beneath the folds of her yards of skirt, pulled on her stockings and lastly her boot. An uncontrollable shiver coursed through her veins, the dark, muddy swampland taunting her. Going back into

SWEPT INTO DESTINY

that swamp to retrieve her lost boot was not something she relished. But she must. How would she explain her missing boot to Mr. Reynolds?

Ben followed her glance and offered her his hand. "Take it if you like. I'll only offer it once."

There was something vital and exciting about his grip. His riot of curly black hair fell about his soiled red bandana in mischievous abandonment, only there was nothing frolicsome in his gaze when he strolled past her. Pausing before entering the gaping hole of the foul-smelling swampland to remove his boots, Ben glanced over his shoulder at her, and was gone.

Goose bumps popped up across her arms, recalling the leeches. "I don't want that old boot, please come out from there—"

"Got it!"

"Oh, you did?" Maggie hopped down the hill, grabbed the dirty boot between thumb and forefinger and examined it for leeches.

"But I'll throw it back in, after all you don't need it."

"No, please, I'll clean it up. You spared me a great amount of explaining."

"And money purchasing such fine boots, I wager." His eyes appraised her. "'Twas not easy. I had to do some feeling about before I recovered it."

Maggie looked at his mud-caked arms, aghast. "Oh, but you... you must have three times more leeches than I."

"Your kind worried about my kind?" He stepped closer.

My, he was tall and strangely chivalrous in his barbarous sort of way.

The snakebitten man's groan split the air between them like a lightning bolt. Maggie followed Ben up the hill and knelt down. The man's face was pasty white in a sea of black whiskers, his arms just skin covering bones. She glanced at the other Irishmen. Their cheek bones shone beneath mud-blackened, gaunt faces, and homespun shirts darned so many times there was more thread than cloth, plastered their shallow chests.

Sudden fear clawed her throat. Their needs were far too many for her to comprehend, and she had her school to protect. "I, I must return home." Grass and dirt particles clung to her wet and putrid garments as she rose. She shook her skirts, trying to rid them of the decay, and backed away from the living corpse sprawled on the grass.

Her mare nickered softly as she stuffed her muddy riding boot in her saddlebag, then reached for her horse's reins, trying to block out the memory of death and deprivation not more than ten yards away.

Ben arms reached past hers, looping her mare's reins through his arm, he bent his shoulders forward, cupping his mud-blackened hands. Her stocking foot curled around his palm as he lifted her easily into the saddle.

A spark in the depth of his liquid eyes—bold, yet gentle—the lift of his chin, the thrust of his shoulders, displayed his pride and unbeaten spirit. Poor wretched people the Irish, there was little hope for them of elevating their position in society. It's a good thing they carry their pride with them.

"I'm sorry. I wish there was something I could do. I'll bring some bandages and soap and clean drinking water back with me."

"Sorry, are ya?" Ben said, his hands drawn into fists by his sides. "We know about you landlords from our native Ireland." His chin poked forward like a boxer's. "The potato famine we left and then coming to America and no one givin' us work and our children and women hungry and sick. Lost amidst this sea of conscience and consequence, we are." In suave finality, he saluted her as eloquently as any southern gentleman, only in tattered rags. "We can take care of our own. Been doing it for more than 300 years and don't need the likes of you tellin' the likes of us how to survive."

The audacity of this man throwing her goodwill back into her face without even a 'thank you kindly' added to the end of it. "This is America, not Ireland, and we do things differently here." She took off at a gallop, jumped a hedge, and headed for the safety of Spirit Wind.

Ben's eyes had said more than his hateful words. He didn't believe she'd return. Well, she'd show him.