



LOVE'S A MYSTERY *in*

# SLEEPY HOLLOW NY



**SNEAK  
PEEK!**



Gabrielle Meyer &  
Ruth Logan Herne

# *Love Learns the Truth*

By Gabrielle Meyer

---

*Sleepy Hollow, New York, 1820*

## Chapter One

Deep purple, red, and orange blanketed the hills along the Hudson River. October had unfurled her brilliant colors across North Tarrytown, New York, which Hannie Van Brunt knew better as Sleepy Hollow. Fall was her favorite time of year, when the bountiful crops were harvested, the cooler air was redolent with the scent of woodsmoke and rain, and the farmers of Sleepy Hollow slowed their work to enjoy more visiting.

Hannie stood at the kitchen window, a mixing bowl in hand, as she admired the view. Her gaze surveyed the lane leading up to the old Van Tassel farm, waiting impatiently for her father's arrival. The farm was still known as the Van Tassel place, though her father, Abraham "Brom" Van Brunt, had inherited it upon his marriage to Hannie's mother, Katrina Van Tassel, thirty years ago that spring. Though it had been in the Van Tassel family for several generations, and they had enjoyed great prosperity, under her father it had flourished even more. It was widely known as the largest and prettiest farm in all of New York state—and it would be Hannie's one day—if and only if she married.

Which, at the age of twenty-four, seemed less and less likely.

"There's no time to be woolgathering, child," Mama said as she bustled into the kitchen, her basket laden with vegetables from the kitchen garden. At the age of forty-nine, she was still as fair and beautiful as she was the day she married, or so Papa often told her. Mama always blushed and reminded him of her thickening middle or the gray hairs entwined like silver amongst the golden strands, but Papa would pull her into his arms and tell her she only grew lovelier with age. "They'll be here any minute and we've yet to get the boterkoek in the oven."

“I’m about to pour it into the pan now,” Hannie said calmly as she spooned the butter cake batter into the prepared baking dish.

Salome, one of the house servants who often worked in the kitchen with Hannie, took the vegetables from Mama. She would stew the tomatoes for tomorrow’s breakfast.

Mama went to the cast iron stove and stirred the boerenkaas soep, a thick, vegetable cheese soup made from the boerenkaas cheese Mama was known for across the hollow. It was an old family recipe, brought to the new world by Mama’s ancestors from Holland. “Do you have the bread sliced and ready to fry?” she asked Salome.

Hannie slipped the cake batter into the oven and then closed the door before lifting the cutting board and handing it to her mother. “We also sliced the cheese to melt onto the bread.”

The kitchen was warm, but Mama seemed overly hot as she wiped her apron across her forehead. “I just want him to like us.”

Placing her hands on her mother’s shoulder, Hannie gave her a gentle squeeze. “You’re the best cook in the county,” she reassured her mother, “and you’ve made enough food to feed everyone in the hollow. I don’t see how he couldn’t be impressed.”

Mama grabbed a pan and placed it next to the pot of soup. It wasn’t like her to be so distracted or insecure, especially where her cooking was concerned.

It made Hannie pause for the first time since she learned that Mr. Gideon Webb would be boarding with them. “Mama?”

“Hmm?” she asked as she scooped lard into the pan. The little glob melted as it slid across the surface of the hot metal.

“Why are you so nervous about impressing the new schoolmaster?”

“Am I nervous?” Mama giggled uncomfortably.

Hannie crossed her arms over the high-waisted dress she wore. It was her second-best gown, with a dark green background and little pink flowers. It was now covered with an older apron to keep it from getting soiled. She’d gone up to change earlier, knowing Mr. Webb would arrive while they were still preparing supper and she wanted to be ready to receive him.

“Is the table set?” Mama asked as she laid pieces of bread onto the melted lard.

“It’s been set for hours.”

“And you found some fresh flowers for the vases?”

“I placed a large bouquet of purple and white asters on the table.” Hannie didn’t move, though there was much to be done. “Who is Mr. Webb, Mama?”

“Hmm?” Mama seemed absentminded—very unlike her.

“I said,” Hannie moved into her mother’s line of sight. “Who is Mr. Webb? And why are you so concerned about impressing him?”

Mama looked at Salome uncomfortably, before she addressed Hannie. “He’s the new schoolmaster, of course. You know that.”

“What else is he?”

“Really, Hannie. You act as if I’m hiding something.”

“I’ll find out eventually. You might as well be upfront with me.”

Mama was never one to keep secrets long. Secrets felt like lies to her and she was too good and too kind to offer a strong defense.

“Oh, all right, if you must know.” Mama let out a sigh and finally turned toward Hannie, speaking quietly, though Salome had been with them for years and wasn’t prone to gossip with the other servants. “He’s the son of a very good friend of mine from Springfield, Massachusetts. His father was a vicar and his mother, my childhood friend, died when he was very young. When he sent his letter to inquire about the teaching position, I recognized his name and sent a letter to his father.”

“And?” The Van Brunts were widely known for their hospitality and generosity. Why one more visitor would bring such anxiety to her mother was a mystery.

“And,” Mama drew out the word as she flipped the fried bread over, revealing a perfectly golden top. “His father and your father exchanged—how should I say this—mutual interest in seeing the two of you paired.”

“Paired?” Hannie’s arms fell to her sides as Salome glanced over her shoulder in surprise. “As in, an arranged marriage?”

“Oh, no,” Mama laughed as she patted Hannie’s arm, “nothing as archaic as that, sweetheart. You know how concerned Papa and I are about your

future happiness.”

“You mean the future of the farm, don’t you?” Hannie tried not to bristle, knowing her mother meant well, but also knowing that if she did not marry, the farm would be inherited by one of the Van Tassel cousins, Casper. He would be next in line, though he was a lazy sort of fellow with a penchant for ale. He’d been eyeing up the farm since he was a lad. Hannie knew that if he inherited the farm, he would squander all her father’s hard work.

Yet, what was Hannie to do? Not one of the men in the hollow had ever turned her head—not seriously. They were either too masculine, with little heart—or too spineless with little brawn. She didn’t know what she was looking for, but she knew she hadn’t found it. At the age of twenty-four, she was beyond her prime and an old maid in the eyes of many neighbors and family members. But she refused to settle—even if that put the farm at risk.

**Now read on for a taste of your second story,  
*Love Stirs the Pot*, the modern-day romance mystery  
in these intertwined tales!**

# *Love Stirs the Pot*

By Ruth Logan Herne

---

*Sleepy Hollow, New York, Present Day*

## Chapter One

Baking White Mountain rolls at Granny June’s Sleepy Hollow Soup Shop on a Friday morning was about as far from Lower Manhattan investment banking as a girl could get. It didn’t just feel nice.

It felt great.

Tess McIntosh closed the oven and checked the dough in the adjacent proofer. It wasn’t quite ready, and she had thirty-seven minutes until customers would start streaming through the thick tempered glass front door

facing Cortlandt Street.

Warm scents soothed. Chicken noodle soup. Minestrone. Beef with barley, a fall favorite. It was too early for stews. Gran never made stews before November, and when she did, folks stood in line to buy quarts of the rich, savory meal.

Granny June specialized in food to feel good about, using a mix of recipes as old as her eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ancestors and as new as a click on the internet. And weaving through it all was Gran's secret weapon: the enticing scent of baking bread.

Tess poured coffee and reached for the cream. The back door slammed, then the front door opened. She wasn't sure who was responsible for the former, but the latter? She'd know him anywhere.

The rugged stance. The eyes a woman could get lost in. Years ago, he'd wooed her big sister Bridget, never noticing Tess's schoolgirl crush.

He stared hard, as if trying to place her, and she saw the moment he finally put her face with a name. "Tess?"

He'd only grown better looking in the fourteen years since she'd seen him. His romance with Bridget had dissolved, he'd finished college and settled someplace upstate.

"Home to visit, Riley?" She kept her voice cool. Deliberately cool. An ice factor of nine out of ten. And he deserved it because if the big oaf didn't realize she'd been crushing on him all those years ago, shame on him.

"Kind of." His eyes widened. He gave her a smile—that smile—the one that had put her in gaga-land years before, but she wasn't a lovestruck fifteen-year-old any longer. "Tess, you look great."

Flirt with him. Have some fun. That's what Bridget would do.

She wasn't Bridget. She had no femme fatale skills, and maybe that's why her few romantic liaisons had dissolved before there was anything to write home about.

"You're helping Gran?" he asked.

A safe topic. Good. "I decided the latest financial debacle in Lower Manhattan was my last. I wanted tranquility."

"Can't get more tranquil than soup and bread," he replied.

Bread.

The rolls!

She hurried to the kitchen.

Gran was there, leaning against the counter she used for dicing and slicing, and from the look on her face, Tess was in trouble. Big trouble.

The scent of scorched bread filled the air. Tess hurried to the oven and opened the door, magnifying the scent.

She grabbed potholders and quickly disposed of the rolls in the dumpster out back to minimize the noxious odor, then came back in.

Gran had tears in her eyes. Gran rarely cried, and mostly when she was mad, and when she aimed her gaze at Tess, Gran was steaming. Tess hurried toward her.

“I’m so sorry, Gran. I meant to set the timer, I know how quickly those rolls bake, and I’ll be more careful. I promise. Cross my heart.” Gran’s White Mountain rolls were a town treasure and she’d just ruined a tray of eighteen.

“Forget the rolls.” Gran motioned Riley over. Tess, too.

She pointed a finger toward the big butcher-block worktable in the center of the kitchen.

A full-color brochure lay open. It was filled with heart-wrenching pictures of needy dogs and cats, the kind that made folks reach into their wallets. And next to it was an envelope marked “Return to Sender.”

Tess looked from Gran to the brochure, confused.

“Gone.” Gran poked a finger toward the table, then folded her arms tight across her chest, as if choking on the words. “Gone. All of it. The money collected for this fake shelter from so many folks around town. Cat lovers, like me. Dog lovers, too. We had meetings about it, every Tuesday this summer until things got too busy.” She bit back a sob.

Busy was an understatement for the tourism trade in Sleepy Hollow, New York. The author Washington Irving had made the town famous over a hundred years before and locals weren’t afraid to cash in on it now. Tess moved closer. “Gran, I’m sorry.”

“I’m the sorry one.” Gran pulled off a sheet of paper towel and when Tess offered her a tissue instead, Gran’s lower lip stuck out, stubborn as ever. “I don’t

deserve soft tissues at the moment, Tess, although I appreciate the gesture. I have managed to single-handedly bilk my friends, family and neighbors out of over twenty-one-thousand dollars to help a cause that doesn't exist."

"How do you know it doesn't exist?" asked Riley. "Gran, there might be a reasonable explanation for all this. Let's look into it."

She wasn't his grandmother, but half of Sleepy Hollow called June McIntosh "Gran," and Riley had known her that way all his life.

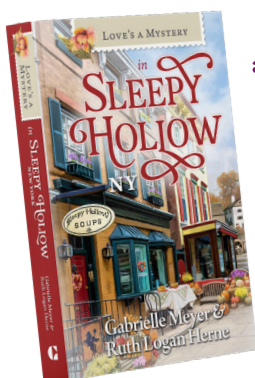
"I checked everywhere, Riley. Everything the foundation stood for and promised is gone. Erased. Error Codes popping up all over, showing this old gal the error of her ways. Well let me tell you." Gran raised herself up to her full five-foot, two-inch height. "I don't go down easy. I don't go down without a fight. And I don't—"

Her right hand flailed. She raised it up, then brought it in, straight to her heart.

And if Riley hadn't caught her as she crumpled, Granny June McIntosh would have toppled to the floor and Tess's heart would have gone right along with her.

---

## *Don't Miss the Romance and Mystery!*



Enjoy both stories of Hannie and Gideon, and Tess and Riley, in Guideposts' brand-new romantic mystery, *Love's a Mystery in Sleepy Hollow, New York.*

**Order Now**

**Free Gift \$15.95 Value**

