

Chapter 12

Iona Hope Branch Gander

***** Go back for Iona's early years and then pick up here.

Iona turned twenty-two in September 1907 and her sister Fairy was almost eighteen. The young women had achieved a measure of independence through their jobs in town and they could also keep up with the social life. One day, Fairy ran over to Iona and gushed, "Guess who's in town? Harve Gander!" Harvey Smithton Gander was actually from a farm not far from the Branch's own. Although he was four years older than Iona, they had known each other for many years. Harve's own family had endured many hardships after the loss of Harve's father William Franklin Gander when Harve was five years old. The Ganders had owned more land than the Branches but they had more children to support in their blended families and had faced very hard times after the unexpected death of William from blood poisoning following an accident. Harve had dropped out of school after the third grade because he felt he needed to help support his mother. While he was very bright, especially with his arithmetic, his writing would always reflect the limits of his education. Thus, entries in his farming books for paying his field hands displayed a phonetic understanding of English, such as Hairl as the name for Harold. He was a shrewd small businessman and knew how to build a brand name and market his wares across many states. Although the coming Great Depression would be challenging to all Americans, these two people were well prepared to survive and thrive in hard times.



It turned out that these neighbors; with their similar hard-luck histories of losing their fathers so young were a perfect match. They had skipped rope together at the Kinkaid school and church socials as youngsters. They both knew how to "wax the little corners" and had grown up having to do exactly that. They found in each other a soul mate and a working teammate with whom to build a life. In February 1909 they were married. Herb was almost seven years old but he was considered as a son by Harve and was a much beloved brother to the siblings he would soon have.



On January 3, 1910 Harve and Iona had their first child together. This whopping, healthy little girl entered the world weighing over 10 pounds. Her parents named her Elsie Maude Gander. However, this name wasn't to the liking of the very bright and fiercely independent girl and she renamed herself Jacqueline or Jackie by the time she was nearing adulthood so that only her mother continued to call her Elsie. The midwife was Aunt Mandy Henderson, a freed black woman.



In 1912, Harve and Onie Gander bought a 160-acre farm in Marion County, Missouri, from Harve's half-brother Tom White. They moved into the old house that had been built many years before. On the eve of World War I, on August 2, 1914, Harvey Joe

Gander was born. Jackie began going to school with her older half-brother Herb that fall. By now, Herb was 12 years old and becoming a young man.

On Valentine's Day, 1916, their third child was born, Clifford Robert Gander. He was yet another whopping healthy child. But, all was not well in the old house. Rats lived in the floors and came out at night to pillage the clothes and rugs in the home to pull into their own nests. Onie was dismayed and upset to be raising her children in such conditions. One day after seeing a rat pulling socks down into a hole she had had enough. "Harve, we just can't live in this house any more!" He understood and agreed completely. So he got out some paper and a pencil and commenced to cipher out a house plan. Apparently following a popular layout of the era, he laid out a two story square house. He figured out the dimensions and the size and number of logs that would be needed. His father had been quite a carpenter and even though his father had died when Harve was only five, Harve had luckily inherited some of the same skills. In 1918 the family had a new, spacious house with a grand, almost Frank Lloyd Wright styled, set of built in cabinets and columns separating the dining room from the living room. Whether by design or just lack of time,



the square columns were never fully nailed or glued into place and still tend to move a bit after periods of heavy traffic. However, Clifford Gander recalls that this meant they had an easy place to hide money or other valuables during the Depression. One of the rooms upstairs was called the "back room" and was never fully finished during Harve and Onie's lifetimes. This was the source of thrills and chills for their grandchildren. The ceiling was not fully covered so that the roof rafters were visible and the dark recesses of the attic invited wild fantasies of monsters and goblins. The skullcap of a deer with the antlers attached hung on one door. Wasps tended to build their nests inside the windows and the furniture was sparse. Sleeping in this room was an exciting event for a ten-year-old child with a vivid imagination.

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