

FIN'S REVOLUTION: BOOK ONE

# The Fiddler's Gun

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RABBIT ROOM

— P R E S S —

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE



## THE BEGINNING

**T**HE TROUBLE WITH PHINEAS Michael Button began the moment she was born. She had the expected two ears, two eyes, one nose, and dimpled cheeks, but in her father's mind there was a problem. He had twelve children, daughters all, and was convinced that number thirteen would be his long-awaited son. So on the twenty-fifth of September, 1755, when he drew another baby girl from the womb of his long-suffering wife, he declared the discovery of an unacceptable mistake. He held up the little squirmer by a leg and inspected it with great suspicion, turning it first one way and then another as if peering at the child from differing angles might produce a change in its gender.

After a long and uncomfortable spell of dangling the child by a leg and harrumphing in displeasure, he handed it over to his wife and asked, "What's that, then?"

"What is it? What *is* it?" Matilda-Mae Button screamed at him.

"Twelve of them you had already and still not got it right. We ain't keeping this one." He nodded, walked away, and scarcely gave the child another thought for more than twenty years.

To her meager credit, Matilda-Mae Button didn't give up quite so easily as her husband. She named the child after its father, hoping she could trick him into thinking she'd fixed it. And then she went so far as to whisper in the child's ear tales of what a good boy she was and lies of what a fine man she'd

grow to be. It was a conspiracy of conviction she visited upon her daughter in hopes of talking her newborn child out of the way she'd been made in the womb. Raising twelve other daughters was trouble enough, though, and trying to fool number thirteen into a son eventually grew tiresome.

Upon the morning of the seventh day of her life, Phineas Michael Button crossed the Savannah River into the Georgia colony. She was swaddled tightly and tucked deep into the arms of one of her twelve sisters, who were, in turn, tucked into the back of a covered wagon. In the front seat, her parents argued in whispers and hushed exclamations. They'd arrived in the town of Ebenezer and the discovery of an orphanage had generated a decisive mood in their father and a quarrelsome one in their mother. Many words flew in both directions between the two, but it will suffice to say that when the wagon clattered its way out of Ebenezer that morning, the orphanage had gained a child and the wagon had lost one. The Buttons left behind a bundle of red curls and unwanted promise, and Matilda-Mae uttered a silent prayer that her thirteenth baby girl would somehow know a full life in spite of her unkind beginnings.

The Baab sisters of the Ebenezer orphanage were ready and willing to answer that prayer and see it through, but time has a way of leading a person along a crooked path. Sometimes the path is hard to hold to and people fall off along the way. They curse the road for its steep grades and muddy ruts and settle themselves in hinterlands of thorn and sorrow, never knowing or dreaming that the road meant all along to lead them home. Some call that road a tragedy and lose themselves along it. Others, those that see it home, call it an adventure.