



*a*  
Hundred  
Crickets  
Singing

A NOVEL

CATHY GOHLKE

# Praise for Cathy Gohlke

## *Night Bird Calling*

“Gripping. . . . Gohlke creates a cast readers will love, and the strong themes of the bonds of family forged outside one’s kin resonate.”

*PUBLISHERS WEEKLY*

“*Night Bird Calling* interlaces themes of redemption, friendship, and grace, and its depiction of a small southern town is reminiscent of writings by Lisa Wingate.”

*BOOKLIST*

“Engrossing. . . . A sumptuous, textured ode to small-town relationships.”

*FOREWORD REVIEWS*

“In *Night Bird Calling*, Cathy Gohlke mines the national spirit on the cusp of WWII and successfully illuminates how communal change can manifest through unconditional love.”

SARAH McCOY, *New York Times*, *USA Today*, and internationally bestselling author of *Marilla of Green Gables*

“With her signature gift for delving into topics and truths as relevant to us today as they are to the characters found within these pages, Cathy Gohlke delivers a poignant story rich with vibrant characters, woven with spiritual depth, and bound together by hope.”

AMANDA BARRATT, author of *The White Rose Resists* and *My Dearest Dietrich*

“*Night Bird Calling* inspired a whole range of emotions. It made me smile, then cry. I became angry at the villains, then rejoiced because of the bravery of the characters. I kept turning pages because I had to know what would happen next. One of the best books I’ve read all year!”

VANESSA MILLER PIERCE, bestselling author of the *Loving You* series

“*Night Bird Calling* will break your heart before it fills it up again with hope. Lilliana has endured what no person ever should—abuse in the name of religion. . . . I applaud Gohlke for vulnerably sharing this story of messy redemption. Read Lilliana’s story, but then please share it with someone who is also desperate for the freedom Christ offers.”

LUCINDA SECREST McDOWELL, author of *Soul Strong* and  
*Life-Giving Choices*

“*Night Bird Calling* is a spellbinding story about the evils of racism and abuse but also the transformative power of forgiveness. With her signature style of elegance and grace, Cathy Gohlke has created another beautiful, poignant novel that stirred something deep within me. This is a gift for all those who love to read redemptive fiction.”

MELANIE DOBSON, award-winning author of *The Curator’s Daughter*  
and *Memories of Glass*

“Sight and sound, feeling and scent permeate *Night Bird Calling*, Cathy Gohlke’s sensate and gripping new release. Deft with description and tact, Gohlke handles unfortunately timeless issues sensitively and with hope.”

JANE RUBIETTA, speaker and author of *The Forgotten Life of Evelyn Lewis*  
and *Brilliance: Finding Light in Dark Places*

“Cathy Gohlke tells a stirring story that touches on challenging life events—abuse, racial tensions, and injustice—through the eyes of a woman seeking sanctuary and a precocious preteen trying to make sense of life events beyond her maturity. Beautifully written, this novel is a powerful, poignant, and sensitive portrayal of imperfect people struggling through their frailties and learning how choosing grace, mercy, and love can heal many wounds.”

MICHELLE ULE, author of *Mrs. Oswald Chambers: The Woman behind the  
World’s Bestselling Devotional*

## *The Medallion*

“A riveting read from cover to cover, *The Medallion* is one of those extraordinary novels that will linger in the mind and memory long after the book itself is finished.”

MIDWEST BOOK REVIEWS

“This is a thought-provoking novel of courage, survival, and unselfish assistance during the Holocaust.”

HISTORICAL NOVEL SOCIETY

“Cathy Gohlke skillfully weaves true stories of heroism and sacrifice into her novel to create a realistic portrayal of Poland during WWII. *The Medallion* is a stunning story of impossible choices and the enduring power of faith and love.”

LYNN AUSTIN, author of *If I Were You*

“A master storyteller, Cathy Gohlke has created unforgettable characters in unthinkable circumstances. This story completely undid me, then stitched me back together with hope. A novel that has grabbed my heart—and won’t let go—for what I’m sure will be a very long time.”

HEIDI CHIAVAROLI, Carol Award–winning author of *The Hidden Side*

“*The Medallion* is a beautifully written story with a riveting plot, realistic characters, and moving themes of sacrificial love, redemption, and forgiveness. Highly recommended for readers who are willing to stay up late, because they won’t be able to put this book down!”

CARRIE TURANSKY, award-winning author of *No Ocean Too Wide* and *Across the Blue*

## *Until We Find Home*

“Gohlke’s powerful historical novel features a suspenseful and heart-wrenching plot and unforgettable characters.”

*LIBRARY JOURNAL*, starred review

“Gohlke’s latest takes place in England’s lush Lake District during the early days of World War II. Readers will likely smile at appearances from various literary icons, such as Beatrix Potter and C. S. Lewis, among others. The story is well researched and well written.”

*ROMANTIC TIMES*

“Splendid at every turn! *Until We Find Home* is a lushly penned novel about a courageous young woman whose definition of love—and trust—is challenged in every way. A must for fans of WWII and British front history. Not to be missed!”

TAMERA ALEXANDER, *USA Today* bestselling author of *To Whisper Her Name* and *A Note Yet Unsung*

“*Until We Find Home* is a deeply moving war story. . . . Gohlke’s well-developed characters, vivid descriptions, and lush setting details immerse readers into the story. All the way to the very last page, readers will be rooting for the unlikely family forged through the hardships of war.”

JODY HEDLUND, Christy Award–winning author of *Luther and Katharina*

## *Secrets She Kept*

“Cathy Gohlke’s *Secrets She Kept* is a page-turner with great pacing and style. She’s a terrific writer.”

FRANCINE RIVERS, *New York Times* bestselling author

“This well-researched epic depicts life under the Nazi regime with passionate attention. While the Sterling family story serves as a warning about digging into the past, it is also a touching example of the healing power of forgiveness and the rejuvenating power of faith.”

*PUBLISHERS WEEKLY*

“Gohlke takes the reader on a compelling journey, complete with mystery and drama. She weaves in real stories from Ravensbrück, making this drama one that will be difficult to forget. It is well researched, and the multilayered characters demonstrate the power of love and sacrifice.”

*ROMANTIC TIMES*, Top Pick Review

“Gripping . . . emotional . . . masterfully told, this is an unforgettable tale of finding family, faith, and love.”

*RADIANT LIT*

## *Saving Amelie*

“Moving. . . . At times both emotional and suspenseful, this is a fantastic novel for those who love both historical fiction and human-interest stories.”

*ROMANTIC TIMES*

“In this compelling and tense novel, Gohlke tells a haunting story of the courageous few who worked tirelessly and at great risk to themselves to save people they did not know. . . . Reminiscent of Tatiana de Rosnay’s stirring stories of human compassion and hope, this should appeal to fans of both authors as well as to historical fiction readers.”

*LIBRARY JOURNAL*

“Definitely worth the read. Cathy Gohlke is a very talented author, and . . . I recommend *Saving Amelie* for everyone who likes World War II . . . fiction with inspirational tones.”

FRESH FICTION

A Hundred  
Crickets Singing



## Also by Cathy Gohlke

*William Henry Is a Fine Name*

*I Have Seen Him in the Watchfires*

*Promise Me This*

*Band of Sisters*

*Saving Amelie*

*Secrets She Kept*

*Until We Find Home*

*The Medallion*

*Night Bird Calling*



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Hundred  
Cricket  
Singing

CATHY  
GOHLKE



Tyndale House Publishers  
Carol Stream, Illinois



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*A Hundred Crickets Singing*

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Edited by Sarah Mason Rische

Designed by Lindsey Bergsma

Published in association with the literary agency of Natasha Kern Literary Agency, Inc.,  
P.O. Box 1069, White Salmon, WA 98672.

Scripture quotations are taken from the *Holy Bible*, King James Version.

*A Hundred Crickets Singing* is a work of fiction. Where real people, events, establishments, organizations, or locales appear, they are used fictitiously. All other elements of the novel are drawn from the author's imagination.

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#### **Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN 978-1-4964-5348-8 (HC)

ISBN 978-1-4964-5349-5 (SC)

Printed in the United States of America

28 27 26 25 24 23 22  
7 6 5 4 3 2 1

*For Dan Lounsbury*

*Amazing brother, encourager, lifelong friend and ally,  
lover of words, stories, adventures and cohort in their discovery*

*With love and thanks for everything*



# Acknowledgments

NO BOOK IS CREATED IN A VACUUM, certainly not one that encompasses the voices of different eras, generations, and races. Definitely not this book.

I am gratefully indebted to my brother, Dan Lounsbury, and to family members from earlier generations for their research and provision of Goforth family history, especially the archives of Samuel Smith Goforth, who inspired parts of the story of Elliott Belvidere, including his loyalty to the Constitution, service in the NC militia, trial before Jefferson Davis for treason and the unusual provisions made by Major Sloane, who saved his life through noncombatant service in the Confederacy.

Thank you to my literary agent and dear friend, Natasha Kern, for championing this book and for walking with me through the challenges it presented in our current national discussions on race.

Thank you, Stephanie Broene and Sarah Rische, gifted editors, for your insightful questions and edits that have so improved this book; Lindsey Bergsma, for this tremendous book cover; Andrea Garcia, for marketing; Katie Dodillet, for publicity; and to all my publishing team at Tyndale House Publishers. You are the best team an author could imagine, and I am so grateful for all you have done in helping to bring this book to life and to readers.

Thank you, Tina-Marie Cornelius, friend and correspondent, for the

title of this book. In a wonderful letter early in our correspondence you mentioned, in relation to something else entirely, “a choir of a hundred crickets singing.” I knew right away that was the perfect title for this book.

Thank you, Robert Whitlow, inspiring author and attorney-at-law, for generously helping me understand the moral questions, legalities, and ramifications of deeds destroyed, and for brainstorming possibilities to escape “deep legal waters” in this work of fiction. I’m so grateful. Any mistakes are mine.

Thank you, Elisabeth Gardiner, precious daughter, for reading an early version of this manuscript and for sharing your insights. I love sharing reading/writing ventures with you.

Thank you, Joe Garofalo, longtime neighbor and family friend, for teaching me how to make red gravy and multiple forms of pasta, the recipe passed through generations of your Rossetti and Garofalo families. Any mistakes in my story’s explanation of this art are mine.

Thank you, dear family, friends, and readers, for your enthusiasm, encouragement, and prayers for the writing of this book and its journey into the world. I pray that the Lord will bless our joint efforts to bring glory to Him and hope and healing to those in need.

Thank you, Uncle Wilbur Goforth, for reminding me that our service to our Lord is daily, wherever we are, whatever we’re doing. When torn between two career paths for the second half of my life’s journey, you reminded me that a sure way to know I am working in the will of God is to ask, “Do I have joy? Is this yoke easy? Is this burden light?” The answer is still yes—writing gives me great joy, the weight of this yoke is easy, and this burden shines as light in my heart.

Beyond all measure I thank my heavenly Father and Lord Jesus Christ for gifts of hope, life, love, family, this season of writing, and for eternal unmerited salvation. In Your daily presence is fullness of joy.

May this book serve as a bridge to understanding the past, as an instrument of peace in the present, and as hope for future transformation of hearts in our world. May it point only to You, heavenly Father, for You are the hope we crave, and You are the healing and salvation we all so desperately need.

# Prologue



*A thousand cannon burst at once and lightning split the sky,  
exploding gnarled branches of Garden's Gate's two-hundred-year-  
old oak, planted before the Revolution was a glint in Patriots' eyes.  
Surely that storm was God speaking—shouting judgment—across  
No Creek and the world in a tornado of fire and wind and rain.*

*By His mercy, sheets of pelting rain quenched the flames that  
shot up in the tree before the house caught fire. But it never kept  
that oak from crashing through the attic roof to slam open a door  
into a world none of us knew, one that would forever change  
our lives and what we'd long believed true about No Creek, the  
Belvideres, and ourselves. I reckon a violent, sudden storm can  
do that—rattle old bones and raise ghosts from the dead.*

FROM THE DIARY OF CELIA PERCY  
NO CREEK, NORTH CAROLINA





# Chapter One



MARCH 1944

NO CREEK, NORTH CAROLINA

Despite the raging midnight storm soaking her to the skin, fourteen-year-old Celia Percy helped Chester, her eleven-year-old brother, drag a heavy tarp from the barn, through the house, and up the attic stairs, doing their best to shield nearly two hundred years of Belvidere ghosts and treasures from pelting ice and rain.

But it wasn't until the stark light of day that the attic gave up its secrets. Even then, in the streaming late-winter sun, Celia wasn't sure she could believe her eyes.

"It's a room—a whole room under the eaves been sealed off somehow." She whistled, gooseflesh creeping up her pink arms.

"You reckon Miz Hyacinth ever knew about this place? Or Miss Lill?" Chester, brown eyes wide, pulled the rain-soaked tarp from some small and ancient chests in the middle of the narrow room, barely twelve by three feet, set against the stone chimney.

"Never said—at least not to me. Don't know how they could have known. There's no door." Celia could hardly believe such a mystery

room existed. They'd been living at Garden's Gate with Miss Lill for over three years and never heard of such a thing.

"Look here—there's a door. Been sealed off, is all." Chester, with skinny, winter-pale arms, pulled aside a rotted ceiling-to-floor drapery to reveal a door in the wall. "Locked." He jiggled the knob. "Been plastered over from the other side."

"Why would anybody do that?" Celia couldn't fathom.

Chester raised his eyebrows, pushing dark-brown hair from his forehead. "It's a mystery."

Celia caught her breath, thrilled to her core. "Sure enough."

"Let's see what's in those trunks."

There was nothing Celia wanted more than to rummage through those trunks, but it was up to her to see that she and Chester got to school on time. *Mama'll have my head if she learns we skipped—even for this.* "After school. We have to wait till after school."

"We can't leave with this hole in the roof."

"Doesn't look like rain today. Let's cover this stuff up best we can. We'll need Olney Tate to help with the roof anyway. I'll leave word with Pearl Mae at the store, ask him to stop by after school."

"But, Celia—"

"Don't 'but Celia' me. You know that's what Mama'd say. I don't want Pearl phoning her up tellin' tales, worrying her. Mama's got enough on her plate, what with Daddy in the hospital all banged up. So be sure to wear your jacket this morning. Pearl Mae will be watching the bus stop from the store and report every word to her mama and ours. Besides, no point catching your death."

Chester grimaced. "I guess."

"If Mama thinks we're not doing right, she'll get the next train out of Norfolk, and then where will Daddy be?"

Their mama had feared leaving them alone, what with Miss Lill in England and Ida Mae away at her sister's in New York. But their daddy's only chance of getting his job back in the shipyard was if he made a clean recovery.

"He needs you, Mama, he does," Celia had assured her. "We'll be all right. What can go wrong in a week or two?"

Celia had every intention of walking the straight and narrow while her mama and Miss Lill were away. *Can I help it if trouble trails me?* It was not a new lament.

• • •

Nobody'd expected such a storm in the middle of March—not snow, but freezing rain in torrents and wind to rival twisters.

“Mmm, mmm. Ides of March, that's what they call it,” Olney Tate, longtime handyman for Garden's Gate and anyone else who needed him, mused when he stopped by after Celia and Chester had returned from school. “Winter's last hurrah before the spring thaw. Usually means snow in these hills.”

“Snow would have been better,” Chester conceded.

“Not that much snow.” Olney shook his head.

“It was the lightning split the tree in two. We saw it out the back kitchen window, plain as day. Like an act of God.” Celia thrilled to the drama of it all.

“Good thing you and Chester hadn't gone upstairs to bed. A tree that size, you never know—could have gone through to the second floor.”

Celia shuddered, not wanting to think on that. “We can't leave this hole in the roof.”

“Or that tree in the attic,” Chester worried.

“Reckon not,” Olney sighed, pushing his billed cap back on his head. “Let's take a look at that attic, see what needs doing.” He climbed the stairs and walked the length of the room, a good portion of which was cut off by the giant tree. Turning from side to side, he took its measure. “Let me talk with the brothers down to Saints Delight. We'll get two or three come up here and pull those limbs out, cut up that trunk, get a tarp on the roof till I can mend it. What's left in the yard can wait a day or so. You two stay out of this mess till we get things secure. Don't want any limbs fallin' and crackin' your skulls.”

“But we were gonna—” Chester began but Celia elbowed him. “Ow! What'd you do that for?”

Celia drew in a sharp breath. *Little brothers are impossible.*

“You were gonna what?” Olney asked, fixing his best eye on Chester.

“Nothing,” Celia intervened, stepping between Olney and Chester.

“Celia Percy.” Olney’s graying brows rose. “Don’t you be messin’ with me. Your ears turn pink when you don’t tell straight, you know that.”

Celia grimaced. “We just want to investigate.”

“Investigate what?” Olney looked as if he didn’t trust either of the two before him.

“The room!” Chester piped up, unable to keep quiet. “There’s a secret room—trunks and everything. Come see!”

Now that the cat was out of the bag, Celia couldn’t contain herself. She worked with Chester, pulling aside the heavy tarp to reveal the narrow hallway down the far end of the attic, its front wall made to look like the end of the room.

“Well, I never,” Olney wondered aloud, reverence in his whisper.

“No telling how long this has been here—built with the house, I guess.” Celia’d been wondering, thinking on it all day. “And these old trunks—we haven’t even looked in them yet. Why would all this stuff be here? Why would they seal it off so nobody’d see?”

“Just that reason. So nobody’d see, nobody’d know. I swan. I never really believed my daddy or his, God rest their souls.” Olney shook his head, running his hand down the grayed stubble on his brown chin. “Been hidden . . . must be more’n eighty years. I vowed it couldn’t be so, knowing old man Belvidere ran the Klan here. What a torn-apart family.”

“What couldn’t be so?” Chester pushed.

“What you’re lookin’ at is a hidey-hole—a room in a safe house, a place where those on the run could hide till it was safe to move on.”

“Run from what? Safe from what?” Chester demanded, but Celia felt the knowing grow.

“Slavery.” Olney nearly spat the word. “Slavery, and slave catchers.”