



# A Sound Of Distant Thunder

*William E. Sherrill*

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A Sound Of Distant Thunder is Historical Fiction taking place during the last year of the American Civil War as it was experienced in Virginia. It centers on Petersburg, Virginia, where the citizens have managed to avoid most of the hardships of the war. That situation changes as the story opens in the spring of 1864. After failing to advance upon Richmond through direct attacks, The Union Army of the Potomac moves undetected in the direction of Petersburg. The arrival of a Union Cavalry advance marks the beginning of the interest that the Union Army has with the city of Petersburg. The Army of the Potomac arrives shortly thereafter, and it does not leave until the city has endured nine months of siege, which only ends with a horrible death march to Appomattox Courthouse, where the Army of Northern Virginia finally surrenders. A Sound Of Distant Thunder tells of both the men fighting in the Army and the women fighting the battle of the home front.

This story centers around the Stoner family:

- Jacob Stoner, the strong patriarch who has managed to keep Oak Manor and his family isolated from the war due to a belief that it is wrong for Christians to fight. Jacob attempts to hold on to his faith and beliefs even in the midst of hardship over which he has no control.
- John Stoner, Jacob's eldest son, who has followed Jacob's lead in his attitude toward the war in spite of the repercussions he has personally experienced. John is suddenly faced with an anger that brings out a desire for bloodshed, and he becomes consumed with a hatred from which he may not be able to return.
- Emily Stoner, John's wife, who has resented the fact that her husband has refused to fight in a war that has already caused the death of her own father in combat, resulting in the erosion of her relationship with John. Emily suddenly finds herself the matriarch of the plantation in the absence of the men, and she struggles for the wisdom and strength to hold the family together in the midst of the siege.
- Sarah Stoner, Jacob's only daughter who has desired nothing more than to honor her father and love her family. Sarah suddenly finds herself without those whom she has loved and to whom she has looked for strength, but she finds love and strength in places she had not looked for them.
- Paul Stoner, who, at the age of sixteen, cannot wait until he is old enough to join the Confederate cause in spite of his father's disapproval. Paul finds himself involved in more than he can manage when the fighting begins, and soon he is forced to make difficult decisions about himself, his family, and his beliefs.
- Taylor Kendall, Emily's brother, who has fought with the Stonewall Brigade since the onset of the war, and has been consumed with hatred since the death of his father two years prior. Taylor now enters back into the lives of the Stoners just as they begin to face their own hardships, and he is determined to stand by John even though he no longer has any hope for victory.
- Lindsey Archibald, who has fought beside Taylor for three years, and who now, unexpectedly, becomes a part of the Stoner household as the situation at Oak Manor rapidly gets worse. Lindsey, who has desired only to fight and survive the war, finds new motivations and desires.
- Hezekiah, Jacob's faithful household servant, who loves the family and stands beside Emily and Sarah even though he has the opportunity to abandon them. Hezekiah proves to be an invaluable asset and source of strength and encouragement to the family.

Follow the lives of the Stoners along with Taylor and Lindsey as they encounter and endure the Battle of The Wilderness, the Bloody Angle, the Siege of Petersburg, Point Lookout Federal Prison Camp, Elmira Federal Prison Camp, the destruction of the Shenandoah Valley, and the death march toward Appomattox.

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