



SETTING

The story begins in October of 1877 at a Southern plantation known as Ion, the home of Violet Travilla and her family.

CHARACTERS

∞ ION PLANTATION ∞

Elsie Dinsmore Travilla, Violet Travilla's mother and the wealthy daughter of Horace Dinsmore, Jr.

Edward Travilla, Violet's father and owner of Ion plantation

Their children:

Elsie ("Missy"), age 20; engaged to Lester Leland, an artist studying in Italy and the nephew of family friends

Edward ("Ed"), age 18

Violet ("Vi"), age 14

Herbert and Harold, twins, age 11

Rosemary, age 7

Daniel ("Danny"), age 3 ½

Molly Percival, age 21, and her mother, **Enna Dinsmore Percival Johnson** (Horace, Jr.'s youngest half-sister)

Aunt Chloe — Elsie's faithful maid and companion, and **Joe**, her elderly husband

Ben — Edward's valet and lifelong friend, and his wife, **Crystal**, the head housekeeper at Ion

Christine — nursemaid to Rosemary and Danny

Enoch — a farm worker

∞ THE OAKS PLANTATION ∞

Horace Dinsmore, Jr. — Violet's grandfather, owner of The Oaks plantation

Rose Allison Dinsmore — second wife of Horace Dinsmore, Jr. and mother of Horace ("Trip") Dinsmore III and Rosie Dinsmore

∞ ROSELANDS PLANTATION ∞

Horace Dinsmore, Sr. — Violet's great-grandfather, a widower; owner of Roselands plantation

Louise Dinsmore Conley — widowed daughter of Horace Dinsmore, Sr., and mother of:

Cal, age 29, manager of Roselands

Art, age 25, a physician

Virginia, age 23

Isa, age 21

Walter, age 20, a cadet at West Point

∞ VIAMEDÉ PLANTATION ∞

(Elsie Travilla's plantation in Louisiana)

Mr. and Mrs. Mason — Viamedé's chaplain and his wife

Mr. Spriggs — the plantation manager

Aunt Mamie — longtime housekeeper at Viamedé

Mrs. Maureen O'Flaherty — a new employee

∞ OTHERS ∞

Dr. Barton — retired family doctor and close friend of the Travillas and Dinsmores

Dr. and Mrs. Silas Lansing — an eminent surgeon and his wife

Dinah Carpenter — granddaughter of Chloe and Joe; now living in New Orleans with her husband and young children

Mr. and Mrs. Mayhew — a New Orleans lawyer and his wife

Mrs. Duke — a mission volunteer

Richard ("Dick") Percival — Molly's brother; a recent graduate of medical school in Philadelphia

James Keith — a young minister from the Midwest

Louis Embury — owner of Magnolia Hall, a plantation near Viamedé; a widower with two daughters, Corinne and Maddie

Dr. Bayliss — a physician who serves the people of Viamedé plantation