

# UNBOUND

A NOVEL IN VERSE

BY ANN E. BURG

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When Mama tells me  
I'm goin  
to the Big House,  
she makes me promise  
to always be good,  
to listen to the Missus  
n never talk back,  
to lower my eyes  
n say, *Yes, ma'am,*  
*no, ma'am,*  
n to not speak  
less spoken to first.

She tells me bout  
the new dress  
I'm sure to get—  
*n sweet muffins*  
*every mornin,*  
she says,  
pullin the thread  
from Thomas's  
old baby gown.

I wind the limp thread  
round a stick, slow  
n careful so not to break it.  
I like soft clothes  
n sweet muffins,  
but not if it means  
leavin Mama.



Since I was little,  
Mama's been tellin me,  
*You keep those eyes  
lookin up—  
that's where the good Lord  
n His angels live.*

So how come now  
she's changin her mind?

*Promise you'll keep  
your eyes down,* she says.

*I promise.*

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*Promise you'll keep  
your mouth closed.*

*I promise.*

*Promise you won't  
talk back.*

*Promise you'll  
keep your  
thoughts n questions  
bou—*

n suddenly,  
like a clap of thunder  
in a sweet blue sky,  
all my promisin

starts feelin like  
a fistful of thorns  
is scratchin my brain.

*I promise. I promise—*  
n then  
*CRACK!*

I drop to the dirt floor  
n crunch into a ball.

*I won't go!* I say.  
*I want to stay with you!*



FOR  
MARC, ALEX,  
CELIA, AND BEN,  
AND FOR VOICES  
UNHEARD OR  
FORGOTTEN

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