

Daughter of the Regiment



William Kincaid



A "New Woman" Novel



Reluctant Press TV/TS Publishers

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By William Kincaid

Even though the hour was early, the July sun made the old men sweat in their buttoned-up suits. Accompanied by family members, reporters, boy scouts and politicians looking to rub off some of their hard won glory, the old men in white beards and distinctive, military headgear stumbled or shuffled on canes through the well-manicured lawns and rows of small white tombstones, fighting through crowds of well-wishers as they had fought each other fifty years ago. Occasionally one of the old men would pause at a grave and memories would flood back of the days when they were young and life was eventful but cheap.

Some of the crowd congregated at the monument to the Gettysburg Address, the only monument ever dedicated to a speech, the people proudly said. One

of the attendees, a proud, handsome woman, now in her late sixties, stared intensely at the bronze bust of the president, flanked by the words of his speech. Her children and grandchildren stood with her, although her husband was absent having unfortunately passed away several years before from diabetes. The woman then broke into a grin that her eldest daughter noticed.

“I wonder what it would have been to have known President Lincoln,” Caroline, the woman’s daughter mused. “It’s too bad you were so young at the time.”

The woman smiled broadly, “But I did meet President Lincoln, twice in fact. You can say he pretty much freed me too.”

“How is that, mother?” the woman’s son, Michael, a Captain in the Navy incredulously asked.

“Let me show you something,” she responded, beckoning her family to follow her through the Gettysburg National Cemetery. She searched among the section reserved for the Pennsylvania soldiers until she finally found the small stone block she sought, T. Blankenship 81 PV.

“T. Blankenship. Who is that?” Elizabeth, her youngest daughter, asked.

“That’s supposed to be me,” the woman grinned.

“You?” Michael responded.

“It’s a long story, but I suppose it’s time to tell you. I was once Thomas Blankenship, the heir to the Blankenship Iron Works in Philadelphia.”

“You are the heir to the iron works for almighty’s sake, I am not going to let you run off and join Mr. Lincoln’s army and get killed, besides you are only fifteen years old,” iron magnate Ebenezer Blankenship thundered at his son.

“But father,” Thomas stood resolute, “the army would take me as a drummer boy or guidon bearer, I talked with the regiment that they are recruiting from our neighborhood. I just need my parent’s permission.”

“It will not be forthcoming. Enough of this nonsense. Besides, this war will be over in two months.”

“And the army is so full of bad elements,” Elizabeth Blankenship added to the ostensibly closed matter. “Drunks, card players, blasphemers, men who consort with loose women. You are too nice a boy to be exposed to such unseemliness.”

“I will serve in the Army, somehow,” Thomas answered with tears choking his young eyes as he left the parlor. He marched up the winding staircase to his room on the third floor of the family’s mansion overlooking Rittenhouse Square in Philadelphia. The sun was setting, and Thomas turned on the gas lamp which gave a soft glow to the room. Immensely frustrated at his parents’ refusal to let him join the Union Army, Thomas sat on the bed and started to undress for the night.

Once naked, Thomas did not don his night shirt, but instead opened the bottom drawer of his dresser, moved aside some pants, and pulled out his most secret collection; a silk negligee, necklace, earrings, tiara and lip rouge all stolen from his socialite mother’s boudoir. Thomas quickly dressed in his

purloined finery, turned down the gas lamp, and gazed into the mirror at the girl smiling back.

Thomas would regularly dress as a girl in the privacy of his room and pose in front of the mirror for hours, believing himself to be a young coquette, but tonight his privacy was interrupted. Caroline McDougall, an Irish immigrant and one of the many house maids, had witnessed the confrontation and felt sorry for him. She had prepared a tray of milk and crackers for Thomas and wanted to cheer him up. He was very nice to her in a non-patronizing or sexually aggressive way, and she actually liked the young man.

Seeing the gas light in the room, she entered and found a young girl instead.

“Oh, I am so sorry,” she said to the horrified Thomas.

“Please don’t tell anybody,” he pleaded with the maid.

A child of the streets of Dublin and Philadelphia, Caroline quickly regained her composure, and laughed. “Don’t worry, your secret is safe with me, Master Thomas, or should I say Miss? So do you have a young lady’s name?”

“No,” Thomas meekly muttered.

“Well,” Caroline grinned, “you will now be Miss Lucinda, Lucinda Fairchild. I kind of like the sound of that.”

“So my dressing as a girl doesn’t bother you?”

“Miss Lucinda, I have two beloved cousins that are working as sporting women even though they are stags and not does underneath their finery. One is now a rich man’s mistress. They are quite striking. I think you will be even prettier.”

Thomas, now Lucinda, could only stare with rapt attention as Caroline McDougall continued, “Here are my terms that I recommend you take. You are a good student at that fancy school of yours, or so your mother says to all her friends. Teach me how to read and my numbers. I don’t want to be a maid all my life. In exchange, I will teach you how to be a pretty young lass who should be able to find a man who will roger you good,” Caroline grinned devilishly.

Lucinda gulped, but Caroline saw desire mixed with fear. “She really is a girl on the inside. I owe it to her.”

Caroline continued, “Your mother is taking your younger sisters to Cape May for the summer next week and your father is always so busy at the factory so we will stay home. You will say you are continuing your studies. In the evenings you will educate me, but in the day we will dress you as a proper young lady and I will teach you how to be one. Your sister Elizabeth is your size, and she has too many clothes to wear. She will leave plenty for you while she is at Cape May. I know a store where we can get you a wig with curls. You will be quite comely.”

A week later, wearing a corset, dress, lace gloves, wig, and elegant hat, the young Lucinda Fairchild was quite comely. Caroline had done her job well in dressing her new mistress.

“Goodness. Is that me?” the young lady excitedly asked.

“The Saints be praised, I would roger you myself if I were a man.”

Lucinda pondered that thought for several seconds before smiling, “I would like to kiss a boy someday,” she said in a reasonably feminine voice.

“All in time, dearie. First we have to teach you how to walk and talk like a girl. In a few days we will go out and about Philadelphia.”

“I promise to be a good student,” the young lady said, hoping to win her teacher’s approval.

For the next few days, Caroline coached Lucinda on how to be a young lady while the rest of the household was away. Lucinda’s father took dinner at a local restaurant, feasting on Delaware Bay oysters and roast beef with his competitors, while liberally drinking whiskey and smoking cigars, unaware that his son was rapidly transforming into a girl.

Caroline had Lucinda walk up and down the steps with a book on her head, sit primly in a chair with her hands in her lap, and read passages from the newspaper or from her extensive book collection with her developing feminine voice. She also taught her women’s work, such as knitting and cooking. Together they would eat dinner, with the young maid and young lady sitting at the dinner table, where Lucinda taught Caroline the alphabet and addition.

Finally, the big day came and Lucinda went out in public with butterflies in her stomach, but Rittenhouse Square was too caught up in patriotic

fervor on this beautiful May day to notice the young eonist, presenting a very passable and attractive young woman of quality. Several stages were decked out with red, white, and blue bunting and featured orators urging the imminent destruction of the rebel army and the capture of Richmond. Resplendently dressed army officers with sashes and swords paraded around the square with equally resplendent young women, causing Lucinda to look upon them with a deep envy.

Tents had been set up on the square and small squads of men drilled with ancient muskets more suited to shooting at Redcoats or the broad side of barns. Recruiting officers at makeshift tables constantly barked out their tickets to fame and glory and young men stood in lines twenty deep to prove their manhood.

From under her hat with a delicate veil that accented her fine, youthful features, Lucinda savored the sights and sounds of a city preparing for war. As Thomas, she could not join the army, as he was too young and small to lie about his age, but as Lucinda she could thrillingly take in the admiring glances of young soldiers, and smile as they chivalrously bowed to her and took off their hats. She just wished that she was a real woman who could make love to them.

The mistress and her maid continued their forays into Philadelphia for several days, with Lucinda getting more and more confidence, talking and flirting with the young lions, when Catherine took her strongly by the arm one evening.

Lucinda looked puzzled but followed Catherine for several blocks until they gazed upon the smoke-filled room of her father's favorite restaurant.

“Your father should be leaving soon, I want you to walk right by him. I am sure he will have no idea it is you.”

After a wait of ten minutes, Ebenezer Blankenship emerged, savoring an expensive Virginia cigar after a satisfying meal. Catherine pushed Lucinda into the sidewalk and ducked away, so that she would not be recognized.

Lucinda saw her father walk towards her, gulped, then confidently strolled past him, hearing him grumble something about how proper young ladies should not be unescorted under his breath. Her own father had failed to recognize her. She was a girl.

The summer and the Battle of Bull Run came and went, and Lucinda was joyful, even in the face of an embarrassing Union defeat. Her reverie, however, was coming to an end, as her mother would soon return to their home with her sisters in tow.

With that depressing thought in mind, Lucinda and Catherine made their way past a regimental encampment, observing two young women sporting Army tunics, skirts, and colorful trousers reminiscent of the Zouave regiments now fashionable. “Women in the army?” Lucinda asked Catherine.

“Those are Vivandieres, woman soldiers. I doubt if they do much actual fighting though.”

“What do they do? Lucinda asked.

“Women’s work most likely; nursing, mending clothes, laundry, fetching water, sucking a man’s cock.”

“I would like to do that.”

“Sucking a man’s cock? Dearie, you are getting ahead of yourself, aren’t you?”

“I want to do all of it. I can pass for an eighteen-year-old girl and actually serve in the army.” Lucinda was beside herself with excitement.

“Enough of that nonsense, dearie, I have someone who would like to meet you. He will be calling at your home in an hour.”

Lieutenant Douglas Howell of the Pennsylvania Reserve Light Battery had grown up a shy, sickly but studious child, and his family were part of the Philadelphia elite. His wayward father, however, precipitously left his wife and children for the gold fields of California, had found a new wife and was running a successful mining operation, leaving Douglas’s mother to fall back into the protective bosom of her family that lived across the square from the Blankenships.

Now Douglas was an awkward young volunteer officer in an ill-fitting uniform trying to win the respect of a section of barely trained artillerymen with three Napoleon twelve-pounders. Catherine had observed the young man for several weeks coming back to his home after a day’s drill, and thought he would be quite appropriate as Lucinda’s first gentleman caller. She had told the boy about Lucinda and he seemed genuinely interested in meeting her, being too painfully shy and awkward to start a conversation with a real lady. Catherine met the officer at the door with a knowing smile and led him to the parlor where Lucinda sat in anticipation.

“Miss Lucinda?” Douglas asked.

“It is a pleasure to make your acquaintance, Lieutenant Howell,” Lucinda smiled, holding her delicately gloved hand to the young man who no longer felt so shy and awkward.

Catherine kept the young couple plied with milk and cookies as they talked into the evening. Finally, Lucinda walked the young man to the door.

“I would like to continue to visit, Miss Lucinda,” Douglas announced. “You are very much a young lady in my eyes.”

“Why thank you, kind sir. You are a true gentleman.”

“Shall we say tomorrow?”

“I will look forward to our meeting tomorrow with sincere anticipation,” Lucinda smiled, coquettishly turning her head slightly.

For the next week, the young Lieutenant made a call at the Blankenship home, much to the puzzlement of the neighbors, who knew the Blankenship women were still away for the summer. Lucinda and Douglas got along famously, while Catherine kept up a constant supply of milk and cookies.

One night, Douglas took Lucinda’s soft hand in his own.

“Lucinda, my battery has orders to report to Washington by steamer tomorrow. We are moving out.”

Lucinda’s heart felt a sudden pang.

“I will miss you, Douglas.”

“And I will miss you. But there is one thing I want to do before I depart.”

“And what is that?” the dejected girl asked, looking down at her skirt.

Douglas paused for a minute without saying a word, then leaned over and placed his lips on Lucinda’s. The gentle kissing became more and more passionate until Lucinda thought, “I wish he would not be such a gentleman and take me upstairs.”

Douglas, however, was a gentleman, leaving a disappointed Lucinda to watch him disappear into the summer evening.

Lucinda was despondent the next day. In two days her mother would return and she would have to be Thomas again. She did not want that. She never wanted to be Thomas again.

“I am going into the Army,” Lucinda resolutely announced to Catherine.

“Well, I’m going with you. You will need somebody watching over you. The Army is not a fit place for a young woman of quality like you have become.”

“Go home and play with your dollies,” the fourth union recruiter in a row said to the young girl who wanted to join his regiment. Lucinda looked increasingly depressed as she and Catherine made their way to each recruiting station. There were only two more regiments in Philadelphia and she was resigning herself to becoming Thomas again, as much as she loved being Lucinda and was starting to fall for young Douglas Howell.

“Can I help you ladies?” a captain with dark hair, dark eyes, and a handsome mustache asked Lucinda and Catherine as they approached his recruiting table.

Catherine spoke for the two of them as Lucinda could barely speak now in her disappointment. “We want to join your regiment. We can do anything a man can do. Lucinda here can even pee standing up. We are both patriotic women and want to loyally serve in your Army.”

Captain Michael McMahon laughed and studied the pair. A professional soldier of fortune, he knew the value of women in the military and studied them with interest. The Irish maid with the sassy sense of humor would keep the troops laughing through mud, ice, and storm and shell. She would feed their bellies and bind their wounds and stay with his company until they were victorious or all dead, including herself.

The young lady on the other hand he had to look at with greater discretion. He looked directly into her eyes and she confidently met his gaze. A young lady of quality would make his company truly special. The men would not curse in her presence, nor would they carry on like a bunch of louts. She would elevate them by her quiet, dignified, and beautiful young presence. She would assist her friend with the mundane chores as would be expected, but she would help his soldiers compose thoughtful and touching letters to their sweet hearts and family. She would bring them from the pit of despair with her sentiments as they straggled away from the charnel house he knew the battle field would become. They would sally forth the next day and storm hell itself in order

to show the proper young lady the nobility in their hearts. She would be what they fought for.

“I can’t officially sign you in as soldiers, but as your Captain, I will order you to return here tomorrow at seven in the morning ready for soldiering. I will have Sergeant Collins prepare you a tent and add you two to our ration list.”

Leaving a letter to her mother and father as Thomas, stating that he would somehow join the army, Lucinda carried a large valise with clothing to the camp the next day, while Catherine carried a much smaller satchel and haversack with smoked meats and crackers for the two new soldiers.

Lucinda’s mother was correct, the army was full of drunks, thieves, consorters with loose women, and it frightened her for several days, until she embraced the soldier’s zest for life. Captain McMahon was correct as well, Lucinda’s presence had a refining influence on his company. They always received the highest marks at inspections, and presented the most soldierly air in the otherwise undisciplined and unprofessional 250th Pennsylvania Volunteers. Their campsites were immaculate, and their latrines well kept, preventing the soldiers from dying from the dysentery and diarrhea that ravaged the Army during the winter of 1861 once it assembled at Washington D.C.

That winter, Lucinda befriended Dr. John Hall, the regimental surgeon, as they struggled to keep men alive in the hospital tent. As a trained and highly experienced physician, Dr. Hall saw through Lucinda’s disguise but as a gentlemen, declined to confront her. Although a novice to military life after a career in Philadelphia’s finest hospitals, he noticed Lucinda’s

effect on the men of Captain McMahon's B Company. They acted like soldiers around her, smart and professional, and they were almost never at sick call, whereas the rest of the regiment was still foundering in its own inefficiency and squalor.

The capital of the United States of America was in a state of near bedlam as it tried to recover from the humiliations of Bull Run and Ball's Bluff. The roads were clogged with traffic, wagons, artillery limbers and guns, mule teams, and expensive carriages with courtesans of the highest caliber that worked at exclusive brothels in the very shadow of Mr. Lincoln's White House.

One cold but bright February afternoon, Lucinda and Catherine picked their way through drunken soldiers, hurried clerks, escaped slaves, and an army of peddlers as they returned to Camp California from the farmer's market. The newly literate Catherine had started a sutler's store for the regiment, selling foodstuffs, clothing, playing cards, and camp goods and she was looking to increase the variety of her stock. Now she and Lucinda lugged two duffel bags through the throng. Catherine had served as Lucinda's protector through the months with the regiment, and regarded her as her younger sister, in all respects a young woman.

A well-dressed woman with a Colonel on one arm and a parasol in the other strutted on the sidewalk towards them, but cut in front of Lucinda.

"Sweetie, I know what you really are, and you are beautiful. My name is Sal Austin and I run the best house in the city. You can make a lot of money working for me." Lucinda acted like a giddy school girl when praised by Sal Austin, and could say nothing

but thank you and ask the address, which brought a bark of disgust from Catherine, who grabbed her hand and hurried her away.

“Oh no, she is not a painted tart. Lucinda here is a good young lady and goes to church service every Sunday,” Catherine hissed, leading an enthralled Lucinda through the city.

Nonplussed, Sal Austin called out to the retreating pair, “I won’t forget you, young lady. Just come by at any time and I will put you to work. This war is going to last a long time with McLellan in charge of the Army so there is money to be made. It will set a girl like yourself up for life.”

True to the madam’s prediction, McLellan’s army was in serious trouble as General Johnston’s army attacked it at Fair Oaks in May just outside Richmond, threatening to overrun the part of the army encamped south of the raging floodwaters of the Chickahominy River. The 250th Pennsylvania, now attached to Howard’s Brigade in the Second Corps of the Army of the Potomac waited its turn to wade across the submerged Grapevine Bridge, hastily constructed from tree branches, and come to the rescue.

Bringing up the rear of the regiment, Lucinda could hear the guns firing in the distance and saw the dread in the soldier’s faces. She stepped onto the bridge and the muddy water soaked her skirt almost up to her knees. She now constantly wore a soldier’s tunic with a forage cap with a brass B 250 PV on its flattened face, a sky blue Army overcoat and a pair of expensive women’s riding boots that she had purchased in Washington.

The regiment had yet to experience a real battle, but by the time it reached the scene of the day's fighting, the combat had petered out in the darkening sky. Catherine and Lucinda huddled next to a cooking fire with the men of Company B, fearful of the morrow when Captain McMahon sought them out.

"I will not be able to worry about the two of you tomorrow. I want you to stay with Dr. Hall. He will need you."

"Sir, Lucinda and I are part of Company B even though we don't carry a rifle. You can bet that some of your men will die tomorrow. If we die too, it is by our decision, right, young lady?"

Emboldened by Catherine's words, Lucinda nodded, not able to say a word. She was realizing Thomas Blankenship's hope of being in battle and she was proud to be there, even as a young lady.

"Thomas Blankenship," she thought. "How little I feel like him now, he is so distant. I have become the company mascot of Company B of the 250th Pennsylvania as Lucinda Fairchild and I couldn't feel better about myself. I only wish my family knew where I was."

The next morning the regiment advanced and took positions on a railroad embankment surrounded by woods on both sides on the far right flank of the brigade. The regimental commander, Colonel Biddle, positioned his best company, Company B, on his right flank, the most exposed position.

For several hours the woods to the regiment's front remained quiet and the heat of the day started to be felt by the men in their thick Army tunics. Canteens

started to run dry, but the men had to remain where they were, waiting for the inevitable attack. Positioned just behind the men, with the officers and file closers, Catherine and Lucinda started collecting empty canteens until they looked like bunches of grapes, with twenty canteens strapped across their shoulders. A small creek lay two hundred yards to the rear, and the women staggered back with their load, much to the gratitude of the men of the company.

Gunfire started to erupt in the front of the regiment, and the skirmishers positioned in the woods hustled back to the safety of the main line.

“The Rebs are thicker than the curls on Miss Lucinda’s pretty little head,” Corporal Dawson announced as he took cover beneath the safety of the embankment.

Several men started shooting at fleeting shadows in the woods, when Captain McMahon vehemently ordered them to cease firing. He wanted to hold their fire until the Confederate lines were close, otherwise the fire would be ineffective in the heavy foliage.

A sharp whistle passed over Lucinda’s head, then another and another, causing her to feel tightness in her bowels. She looked at Sergeant Collins, who smiled back and winked. “Take heart, young lady, the Rebs won’t break Company B.”

The Rebs disagreed with Sergeant Collins’s assessment, and started to pour volleys onto the rim of the embankment. Private McGill crouching in front of Lucinda was flung onto his back, with his nose and eyes missing. Dead.

Lucinda tried to vomit but she had not eaten that day, and only could feel bile in her throat. Sensing the uneasiness in the men, Captain McMahon decided it was time to shoot back.

“Aim low and fire at will.”

The men responded with a volley, and began to rapidly fire into the woods. Finally, the Confederate lines emerged and the two sides exchanged fire until both sides were obscured by clouds of sulfurous smoke. Private Hastings cried out in pain, dropped his Enfield musket, and clutched a shattered, bleeding forearm. Instinctively, Lucinda went to him and supported the wavering soldier as she led him to the rear and Dr. Hall. In front of her, Catherine led a soldier, wounded in the shoulder, who left a trail of blood droppings for Lucinda to follow.

Lucinda and Catherine continued their shuttle service for the better part of an hour until the Confederates retired into the woods, leaving their dead where they fell, including a regimental Colonel, who lay on the slope of the embankment. A fresh brigade came through the woods from the rear and relieved the men of Company B who staggered away from the embankment on rubbery legs.

Seeing Lucinda emerge from the fight, Dr. Hall called out to her as he walked through a yard full of wounded men, evaluating their wounds before they were sent to the makeshift operating table in the dining room of a plantation house.

“That damn useless Thomas can’t stand the sight of blood and gore,” Hall shouted, referring to one of his medical orderlies. “I need your help now that your company is out of the battle.”

Lucinda looked puzzled ten minutes later as Dr. Hall handed her a bloody leg that he had sawed off above the knee.

“He won’t need it anymore.” Dr. Hall said as he beckoned towards the open window. Lucinda understood and by the time she and the doctor had finished, she could reach out the window and touch the pile of arms and legs, but the Army was saved that day.

Nothing could be done to save Lieutenant Howell’s artillery section a month later as the Union lines that had fought all day along a swamp at Gaines Mill finally collapsed in a massive dusk assault that swept over them. Discerning that the battery would be overrun, Lieutenant Howell felt surprisingly calm, knowing what had to be done.

“Load with double canister, Sergeant,” he ordered to Kurt Koenig, his section sergeant. Howell then felt a sharp pain in his arm, but would not leave his section. The advancing Confederate lines disappeared as the canister annihilated the front ranks.

“Now Sergeant, we run like the devil.”

In the confusion following the firing of the canister, the embattled artillerymen had a small window of time to make their escape before the Confederates reformed and shot them down. Seeing the blood drip onto the flanks of Lieutenant Howell’s white horse, Sergeant Koenig was proud of his Lieutenant. Inside the slight frame beat a warrior’s heart.

The Union artillery and lines at Malvern Hill were not cracking four days after the confederates overran Howell’s battery, despite confronting furious charges

of Confederates smelling blood from an enemy that had been in retreat. The 250th was on the far right flank of the Union line, under the command of Colonel Barlow from the 61st New York and had stood their ground for hours in an open field in front of a wood lot. Guns fouled and grew too hot to touch, but Lucinda and Catherine had brought the parched troops canteens all afternoon and helped wounded men make their way to the crest of the hill, behind the artillery batteries, where ambulances carried the wounded to Harrison's Landing, a plantation on the James River.

At dusk, both sides were exhausted and out of ammunition but the click of bayonets being fixed to muskets could be heard in the woods. The Confederates were going to make one final charge and there was no more ammunition.

Shouting the high pitched Rebel yell, the Confederates emerged from the woods and sprinted towards the Union line with bayonets at the level.

"Here, grab my hand," Sergeant Collins yelled at Lucinda. She locked arms with him and a file closer to her right, forming a human chain behind the front ranks. The Confederate tide crashed onto the Union shore which fell back until it pressed against the seawall of file closers. Lucinda gripped Sergeant Collins's hand as if by force of will the line could hold. Men pushed against them as they were forced back but Lucinda would not let go. The file closers took a step to the rear, two, then three, but then the pressure relented, and the Confederate wave receded back to the woods. The day had been won.

Being on her feet for three nights had exhausted Lucinda who made her way to the side of a wood

framed house behind the crest of the hill. She could sleep all night here and be ready for the battle the next day.

Unfortunately, General McLellan did not know what to make of his victory and withdrew from an impregnable position to retreat to the safety of the Union gunboats that prowled the James River with their massive guns. The exhausted army did not notice the girl sleeping against the house and walked away into the night, while she slept the sleep of the victorious.

The Confederates were in a foul mood the next day when they found the drowsy girl in the Union Army tunic and hat. Thousands of casualties the day before had not helped their humor in the triumph of pushing a far larger army to the banks of the James.

“What’s this we have here, a little Yankee girl all alone,” a powder-streaked Confederate snarled as he leveled an Enfield at Lucinda.

Lucinda was terrified. What if they tried to rape her? What if they found out her secret? If they found out they would probably kill her.

The Confederates were not about to rape Lucinda, but she would still bear their wrath. A hatless and wounded Captain pushed through his troops. “Well, Miss, your army left you behind to help us with our dead.”

In a blazing sun and without any water, Lucinda toiled through the fields, helping slaves load mangled and foul-smelling corpses on wagons for burial at Richmond. Her gloves were covered in dried blood, her tunic reeked, and her skirt had lumps of flesh on its hem. The slaves looked on her with sympathy

while passing Confederate soldiers shouted at her in derision. Some of the dead Confederates looked as young as she was and some soldiers' ages were impossible to identify, the corpses having lost their heads to artillery fire.

Loading the last corpse into an overflowing wagon, Lucinda staggered away to a rank of mowed down Confederates. "More casualties of artillery," fire she thought, fearful of the bloodbath she would have to again wade in. She dumbly stumbled towards the bodies when her path was blocked by the flanks of a gray horse. She tried to step around it but the rider spurred it forward, blocking her way. She again tried to move past the horse's head and the driver repeated the action.

Finally she looked up at this annoying horseman and saw a Confederate General with stern, intelligent eyes and a white beard.

"Young lady, what are you doing?" the General asked.

"I am a prisoner of war, sir. A Captain forced me to load the bodies on the wagons."

"We are not like your army, young lady, and don't seek retribution on women. Why are you wearing a Union Army tunic and cap?"

"I am assigned to Company B of the 250th Pennsylvania of Richardson's Division of the Second Corps, sir."

"Then you are indeed our prisoner, young lady. It's too bad that your Commanding General doesn't have

a fraction of your courage, otherwise you would be in Richmond. Colonel Taylor,” the General barked.

“Yes, General,” an officious, well-dressed officer came forward.

“Have this young lady escorted personally to Mrs. Pember at Chimborazo. If a hair on her head is harmed, you will be loading bodies and digging trenches.”

“Yes, General.”

“Child, you are filthy,” Phoebe Yates Pember, the matron of Chimborazo Hospital, exclaimed in disgust. “We will burn those nasty Yankee clothes of yours.”

Looking prim and proper, Lucinda emerged in a clean skirt and blouse. Mrs. Pember explained that she was a stickler for cleanliness at her hospital, and that Lucinda would work as a nurse until she was paroled. The hospital matron was dedicated and effective, maintaining a high rate of survival, and she warmed to the little Yankee girl who worked tirelessly in the wards of her enemy. A worldly woman, Mrs. Pember knew the truth of the charming girl, but was too much of a lady to expose her and send her to the prison camp at Belle Isle. Besides, she was so gentle and kind, just like any well-bred young lady, and was too good a nurse to lose.

Two months after Lucinda was taken prisoner, a sudden surge of wounded hit the hospital, including three Union soldiers in bright red pantaloons, Duryea’s Zouaves, the wounded from Second Bull Run, or Manassas as Mrs. Pember called it. In the jubilation of another stunning Confederate success

that led to General Lee invading the north, Mrs. Pember allowed Lucinda free rein about the city, which she believed would soon be independent. What would a frail girl do anyway?

Given some freedom, Lucinda immediately made her way to Belle Isle to ask about men from the 250th. She found a dozen on the island who were jubilant to see their pretty little mascot. The men quickly gathered watches and coins that she could barter at the farmers market for fresh fruit and vegetables. Carrying a basket back to her comrades, she was greeted with a resounding cheer. Lucinda worked tirelessly at the hospital, but at the conclusion of her shift she would visit Belle Isle with a basket of food, until the entire camp thrilled to the sight of the young woman.

On a cold winter's day in December, Mrs. Pember called Lucinda into her office.

“The last prisoner exchange is happening this afternoon, You need to get to Rocketts Landing by 4:00 to board the boat. It will take you back north to Washington D.C. and you will be able to rejoin the Union Army afterwards. I could have let you go in any of the exchanges, as Colonel Taylor instructed, but you were such a valuable nurse that I was selfish and wanted to keep you as long as I could. I rationalized it by knowing that you were also helping those prisoners on Belle Isle. I will miss you, Lucinda Fairchild, or whatever your name really is. Please see me after the war. From what I hear after another battle like Fredericksburg, the North will soon give in and give us our independence.”

The Battle of Fredericksburg had demoralized the Army of the Potomac, especially the troops of the Sec-

ond Corps who had made repeated suicidal attacks against well-positioned Confederate artillery and infantry at Marye's Heights, commanding the open ground beyond the small city. The 250th Pennsylvania had suffered over 150 casualties, and Company B was down to seven men. Captain McMahan had been wounded leading his troops in a forlorn hope against the Confederate left flank, but remained on duty with Sergeant Collins. Five men had deserted and now the regimental morale had collapsed. The soldiers did not drill, their huts were filthy, and Dr. Hall would regularly see entire companies on his daily sick call. The Union Army was experiencing its Valley Forge, while the Confederates basked across the Rappahannock River in their invincibility.

Luckily, the 250th escaped the humiliating Mud March in January, in which the Army foundered in an ill-advised campaign that wore men and animals to their very limits struggling through a knee-deep morass and sleet. The Colonel called his ragtag regiment to muster one morning and found sixty men and Lucinda fit for duty, Caroline having taken ill. The men marched to the depot at the mouth of Aquia Creek and boarded a steamer, delighted to leave their wretched camp at Falmouth. The Colonel advised them that they were going to conduct an expedition in the no-man's land along the shores of the Chesapeake and the mouth of the Rappahannock. Smugglers operated at will in the area, bringing essential goods from the north such as salt, shoes, even weapons in exchange for cotton which would keep the spinning mills of Massachusetts in business, and high priced items like tobacco and hams.

The U.S. Navy could not prevent the trade with the Confederates, as there was just too much shoreline

and too much money to be made in the illicit operation. In desperation Army regiments would search the region for storage barns with illegal goods.

Riding the Navy transport Mohonk, the soldiers relaxed, knowing for once they would not be involved in a pitched battle. The steamer dropped anchor off the mouth of a small marshy creek and the men debarked onto small launches rowed by the sailors. Company B was ordered to investigate a plantation, Arundel, five miles to the east, which had its own wharf. After a leisurely march, the soldiers fanned out and searched through the barns and outbuildings while the slaves looked on their activities with intense interest.

Sergeant Collins and Corporal Dawson immediately found what they were looking for, the plantation owner, a successful physician, Carter Brockenbrough, having become brazenly complacent. His barn held racks of hams, seven bales of cotton, and numerous luxury items marked for shipment to Philadelphia and New York. Captain McMahon politely ordered the doctor to accompany them to the ship from which he would be taken to Washington D.C. and jailed as a smuggler. The doctor, a dignified and intelligent man, quietly packed a valise while the soldiers lounged in the plantation yard.

A middle-aged slave with gray hair and a twinkle in his eye then approached Captain McMahon. "Sir, are you the officer in charge here?"

"Yes, why?"

"Is it true that if we go with you, we will be free?"

“It’s true, by order of President Lincoln.”

“Thank you, sir,” the older man quietly said and walked away.

In ten minutes thirty-three slaves ranging from two week old infants to an old woman of ninety who was born before the Revolutionary War all stood in front of the company.

“Sir, they call me Samuel, after the man in the Bible. We want to go with you.”

Just then, the doctor’s sister, a beautiful and poised woman emerged from the plantation house and approached Captain McMahon.

“Captain, are you taking away our people?”

“Ma’am, if they want to come, they can. “

The woman, Ellen Brockenbrough Anderson then faced her slaves with tears in her eyes.

“Do you want to go with these Yankees? If you do, I can’t and won’t stop you. But don’t think for a minute that you will be treated well up North. We have thought of you all as family and did our best by you at every turn.”

The slaves were touched by Mrs. Anderson’s words, but unmoved in their resolution and marched with Company B to the river and freedom while Mrs. Anderson retreated to the manor with a breaking heart.

Colonel Biddle congratulated Captain McMahon for his work, and the men sat around the shoreline waiting for the other companies to return. Lucinda

nodded off on one of the empty launches, trying to feel some warmth in her Army overcoat when Samuel approached her.

“Excuse me, Miss Yankee girl. Are all Yankee girls like you? Because if that’s true, how do they make baby Yankees?”

Lucinda looked as if she had been hit by a cannon blast. Nobody had yet confronted her directly on her real identity, but Samuel did not look malicious, only curious. She finally regained her composure.

“No, most Yankee girls are just like Confederate girls. Only I am this way.”

“So you are one of those boys that really want to be a girl.”

“Yes, I guess I am.”

“I have known boys like you. I even heard of a slave woman in Petersburg, one who knew the ancient African Voodoo magic, who turned a white planter’s son into a beautiful girl. She worked as a sporting woman in Richmond and married a legislator. “

Lucinda looked on the tale with hope but disbelief, which Samuel sensed.

“Oh, you don’t believe me, but it’s true, Missy. There is powerful magic out there that can make you a beautiful woman, even allow you to make baby Yankees.”

Lucinda wanted so much to believe Samuel but she changed the subject.

“Mrs. Anderson seemed like a good woman.”

“Mrs. Anderson is a good woman, never one to put on airs. She actually thought of us as family, but not every white woman was like her. Some were downright mean. She will have a powerful hard time now, with her brother in jail and her husband in the Army.”

“That’s a shame.”

“What’s an even bigger shame is we have piles and piles of fresh oysters now that we can’t sell to the Yankee smugglers. The waters around Arundel are full of them.”

“I know of some Yankees who would have your oysters, but you won’t get top dollar.”

“I don’t know anything about money, but any dollar is good, I say.”

“So you want me to sell my oysters to the Union Army at Falmouth while my husband is across the river at Fredericksburg?” Mrs. Anderson incredulously asked. “For twenty cents on the dollar from what I was getting on them in Washington?”

“Yes Ma’am,” Lucinda responded. “And we have a lot of soldiers who will buy them at that price so in the end you will do fine. You will get half the profits, while Samuel and I and the freed slaves used to harvest and transport the oysters will get the other half of the profits. You will need the money for the rest of the winter. Our Colonel has already convinced the Captain of the Mohonk to take them, saying they are going for the soldiers, not for some fat ass politician in Washington.”

“Are all Yankee girls like you?”

“No Ma’am, I can honestly say that I am one of a kind.”

The camp at Falmouth was soon inundated with fliers advertising Rappahannock oysters being sold at the sutler’s store of the 250th Pennsylvania in Caldwell’s Brigade. Military discipline in camp which had hovered around non-existent now completely evaporated as soldiers lined up in two queues fifty men long to purchase sacks of oysters for their comrades.

General Hancock, the Divisional Commander, and a stickler for military discipline, was appalled to find a company of soldiers from the Irish Brigade hovering around a fire, roasting oysters and singing ballads.

“Hello, General, Sir,” a surly private from the 69th New York Volunteer Infantry greeted Hancock and his staff. “Just like DelMonicos back home, I say. Now all we need is for you to requisition some loose women for us to try these oysters on,” the private said to hearty laughing among the men whose regiment had nearly been annihilated three months ago.

Historians would attribute the resurgence of the Army of the Potomac to their new commanding general, Joseph Hooker, but that is giving a drunken braggart too much credit. Years later, in living rooms and barrooms from New York to San Francisco, old soldiers would fondly remember the Great Rappahannock Oyster Roast, and how it gave them new hope on a winter’s day.

Lucinda split her money with Catherine when she returned, and Samuel stayed on with the 250th Pennsylvania as its mule driver, leading two mules in its dusty wake to the wilderness clearing of

Chancellorsville where General Hooker holding a full house against General Lee, folded like he had a pair of threes to an opponent that was entirely bluffing.

The battle roared in intensity as Confederate assaults attempted to drive the Union Army away from its river crossing where it could be destroyed. Confederate artillery pounded the troops from a commanding position on a plateau called Hazel Grove, and the 250th was ordered into the thick forest north of a turnpike to serve as part of the rear guard. The woods became choked with smoke from musket fire and eventually flames from burning underbrush incinerated the hapless wounded who had not been evacuated.

Lucinda and Catherine carried wounded away from the fighting through the blinding smoke for an hour and hauled canteens to the soldiers firing blind into the thick trees. On one foray back to the battle, they found the scene eerily quiet. Most of the men had gone, with the exception of E and F Companies, which had been on the left flank of the regiment.

“The regiment is gone, Sir. There is nobody left but you.” Lucinda told Lieutenant Long of E Company, the only surviving officer.

Lieutenant Long ordered his men back to the Union lines somewhere in the thick woods, but they soon found Confederate troops in their rear.

“We are surrounded,” the young lieutenant declared and looked ready to surrender.

Lucinda, however, had developed a good knowledge of the terrain through her numerous trips between the front line and the rear. She knew of a small

creek with a relatively steep bank where she had filled the canteens that would shield the men if they crawled for two hundred yards until the creek emerged from the dense forest.

Led by Lucinda, the thirty men of the two companies worked their way along the stream bed, sometimes in the creek itself, and often as close as ten feet from wandering Confederates who were looking to their front for the main Union line concealed in the trees. After twenty tense minutes the two companies emerged into the Chancellorsville clearing and saw the manor house aflame, and an artillery section of three-inch Ordnance Rifles abandoned by its crews in the yard.

“We can’t let the Confederates take those guns, Sir. We have enough men to tow them back, it looks like most of the battery men are dead or wounded.”

Lucinda led the men to the artillery section and they quickly loosened the prolong ropes and started towing the guns back to the Union rear guard on the road leading to the river, when Confederate artillery opened on them with canister. Helping tow a cannon, Lucinda felt a sharp pain in her buttocks and thighs as three canister balls ripped into her flesh.

“I’m hit,” she cried to the Lieutenant who designated a burly Private to carry her on his back.

“Please get me to Dr. Hall, wherever you can find him. Please, you must.”

An hour later, just before Lucinda dropped into unconsciousness from the laudanum that Dr. Hall administered, she heard Medical Orderly Thomas



shriek, “Lucinda is really a man. Look at that damn thing.”

Lucinda dozed in and out of oblivion for two days after her surgery and the ambulance ride back to Falmouth. Luckily she had been hit by canister at long range; that didn’t have the destructive effect of Minie balls that shattered bone. Her wounds were bad, but did not need amputation.

Still under the effects of the laudanum, Lucinda awoke to see the kindly face of Dr. Hall smiling at her in a tent in which she was the sole patient.

“You will recover. You are very lucky. You have a slight fracture of your femur, but you are strong.”

“Thank you, Dr. Hall. But I heard Thomas yell about my secret before I went under. At least I think I remember that. The last few days have seemed like a bad dream.”

“Imagine a medical orderly serving side-by-side with you for over a year and not figuring out your secret. The sheer incompetence of the man.”

“So you knew?”

“Yes, I did, from almost the time I met you back in Philadelphia. Now do you want to tell me the entire truth?”

“The truth is that I am Thomas Blankenship.”

“Of the Blankenship Iron Works?”

“Yes, Ebenezer Blankenship is my father. I wanted to serve in the Army, but I was too young to join and

he refused. I was to be the heir to the family business.”

“So this is your way of joining the army? Becoming a girl.”

“Yes.”

“Well, three days ago you saved two companies and half an artillery battery. You did much more than you ever would as a drummer boy or guidon bearer, or if you carried a rifle.”

“Yes, but now the men all know the truth about me.”

“Tell me the truth, Thomas. Do you prefer to be Lucinda, do you prefer to live as a young lady?”

Thomas pondered the doctor’s question for several minutes in his laudanum addled mind.

“Doctor, I love being a girl and always wished I was whenever I saw one. But now the regiment will cast me out as they know I am not really Lucinda.”

“Do you want to serve as Lucinda?”

“Yes.”

“Well then, young lady. You will go to Philadelphia to convalesce with my wife Charlotte, and you will return to us as Lucinda.” Dr. Hall then stood up from Lucinda’s cot and went outside. Lucinda could hear him talking to a large group of men, but could not make out the words.

Dr. Hall then parted the tent flaps and the entire Regiment started to file in, each man removing his

forage hat and carrying a sprig of wild flowers in his hand that they placed on her cot.

“Good luck, Miss Lucinda.”

“Get well soon, Miss Lucinda.”

“Be back in time for the next battle, Missy. We will need you.”

“Be strong, young lady.”

“You can save a kiss for me when you return.”

Once the regiment had paid its respects to their beloved mascot and filed out of the tent, Dr. Hall let her sleep the sleep of the victorious.

“Come on, dearie,” Charlotte Hall yelled to Lucinda in her hotel bedroom, trying to hurry her as she finished getting dressed for the celebratory ball in Washington D.C. for the Union victory at the Battle of Gettysburg. The doctor’s wife had taken Lucinda in her home as her own daughter for her convalescence and she recovered rapidly from her wounds received at Chancellorsville.

Now, Lucinda looked stunning in an off-the-shoulder, midnight blue evening dress, sheer black elbow-length gloves, a black-ribbed choker, and a black lace hairpiece worked into Lucinda’s luxurious hair. Emerging from the hotel room, Lucinda shyly looked at the Ocarpeted floor; she looked too gorgeous and was slightly embarrassed as she fluttered herself with her fan in the late July heat.

“I am sure you will have plenty of beaux tonight at the ball,” Charlotte proudly declared.

The main dining room of the hotel had been adapted to hold a dance and all the important personages of Washington D.C. would be there. The ladies made their entrance to the ball, descending down the grand staircase, turning the men's eyes. Lucinda looked at the gathered men and her heart leapt when she noticed one young man in particular, Lieutenant Douglas Howell of the Pennsylvania Reserve Battery, looking far more confident and mature than when she had last seen him in her father's parlor.

Lieutenant Howell casually scanned the women coming downstairs. He had been wounded on the second day of the fighting at Gettysburg and had recovered in Philadelphia at his family home. He now walked with a slight limp. His eyes widened as he saw Lucinda Fairchild looking extremely ravishing, so much so that he felt a massive stirring in his groin.

"Miss Fairchild, what a true pleasure. I have thought about you often." Douglas held out his arm and Lucinda willingly took it, making their entrance into the ballroom together.

The ballroom was decorated with the wartime standard red, white, and blue bunting, and a band played patriotic music before the dancing; Rally Round the Flag, The Star Spangled Banner, and The Battle Hymn of the Republic. Lucinda caught a glimpse of Mary Todd Lincoln, nowhere near her husband, who greeted the guests as they entered into the room, flanked by his secretaries, John Hay and John Nicolay.

"Charlotte Hall, it is a pleasure to see you again," the president said in a deep voice, "and how is your husband the doctor?"

“He is well, still serving with the 250th Pennsylvania in Virginia.”

“Where he is well needed. And who is this charming young lady?”

“This young lady is Lucinda Fairchild, also of the 250th Pennsylvania. She was wounded at Chancellorsville towing away an artillery piece after she had led two companies of her regiment to safety.”

Douglas Howell looked dumbstruck, while President Lincoln loudly exclaimed, “My God, how impressive. If that ass Joe Hooker, had your pluck, we would have won that battle.” Intrigued, Lincoln took a hard look at the young lady, scanning her with his penetrating gaze.

“It is a true pleasure meeting you, Miss Fairchild, I am singularly impressed.”

Embarrassed at the President’s compliments, Lucinda blushed, “Thank you, your majesty.”

Lincoln let out a large guffaw. “Your majesty! Hear that, Hay? It’s about time somebody showed me the respect I deserved.” Lincoln then laughed again. “Enjoy your evening, Miss Fairchild.”

Douglas led Lucinda onto the dance floor, and the two exalted in each other’s presence. Although caught up in the thrill of a waltz, Lucinda noticed the President having a long conversation with Charlotte Hall, while they looked and gestured in her direction. Lucinda, however, felt a deep lust, and wanted nothing more than the heroic Douglas Howell to escort her upstairs and take her like the harlot she wanted to become. It was unfortunate, however, that he was

still too much of a gentlemen to do anything other than give her a deeply passionate kiss at the conclusion of the evening.

In deep contrast to her evening gown, Lucinda wore a cavalryman's tunic, decorated with yellow piping, a skirt, with stockings tucked into her women's riding boots, and an army forage cap proudly emblazoned with the red clover of the First Division of the Second Corps as she made her way back to the war. She rode on the bench of a teamster's wagon until it pulled into the quartermaster's yard for the Corps.

"Here is the end of the road, young lady. The First Division is yonder up the hill."

The 250th Pennsylvania was now down to thirty men under the command of Captain McMahon, having suffered heavily at Chancellorsville and at the Wheatfield at Gettysburg. The men were ragged, deeply sun-tanned, but their rifles were clean and they laughed all the time. They looked and acted like soldiers.

"You picked a poor time to rejoin us, Miss Lucinda," Captain McMahon announced. "We have been retreating for two days. Bobby Lee plans on bagging the lot of us, and we are bringing up the rear."

The two armies had been marching and counter-marching all across Northern Virginia, but after the blood-letting at Gettysburg and the transfer of sizable units to the fighting around Chattanooga, they didn't have the resolve for a major battle. Nevertheless, the Confederacy finally had an opening, as the Second Corps had been caught in an exposed po-

sition and was trying to extricate itself before it was completely cut-off and destroyed.

For two days Lucinda and the regiment marched trying to escape the trap that was closing its jaws around them. On the afternoon of the second day at Bristoe Station, they caught the pursuers of A.P. Hill's Corps in an ambush of their own and won enough room to escape across a small stream and into the safety of the Union lines.

The fast pace of the retreat had left a foot-sore Samuel and two recalcitrant mules in the wake of the Corps, lagging farther and farther behind. Lucinda waited at the crossing watching stragglers cross over into safety, asking if they had seen an old mule driver from the 250th Pennsylvania. Finally, a group of soldiers from the 7th Michigan said they had seen him about two miles back, and that he was probably already in Confederate hands.

"You fool girl," the soldiers shouted to Lucinda as she splashed across the creek. "You'll be in a prison camp by tonight."

"I have already been a prisoner once, I don't intend to be one again," Lucinda retorted as she disappeared down the dusty road in the autumn night. The moon rose, illuminating the road in a glowing twilight and in twenty minutes she found Samuel, the last man in the Second Corps, struggling with a mule who refused to budge.

"This mule, he wants to be a prisoner."

"Leave him. We need to get going."

“I am the regimental mule driver, Miss Lucinda, these mules are my responsibility. Besides, nobody cares about me.”

“Well, I do.”

Lucinda walked up to the mule, quietly talking to it in her soft voice. The mule brayed, but she stroked its muzzle, and in a minute gently got it to take a step forward. She heard voices in the night, Confederate skirmishers advancing up the road.

“Can you run?” Lucinda asked Samuel.

“I haven’t run in ten years, Miss Lucinda.”

“You are going to tonight. You only have a mile to go.” Lucinda said as she accelerated to a brisk jog, leading the mule behind her. Samuel followed her down the dark road. The pair were almost winded with two hundred yards remaining when the pursuing skirmishers turned a bend in the road and saw their fleeting shadows. Shots rang out in the dark and Lucinda’s mule brayed in pain. Lucinda and Samuel broke into a sprint while bullets flew over their heads, the dark of the night hindering the Confederate’s aim. The pair splashed through the creek and the Union pickets from the 15th Massachusetts opened fire now that their aim was clear.

“We were going to leave in another minute. You two are the luckiest damn fools in the Second Corps.”

After an aborted assault in the freezing November weather at another insignificant creek called Mine Run, the Army settled down to winter quarters at Stevensburg and Culpeper. At Christmas, Lucinda received a letter from Catherine, stating that she had

married an officer in the cavalry, and was living in a comfortable apartment in Alexandria. She had started a general store from her share of the oyster money and now business was thriving.

As did his wife, Dr. Hall now treated Lucinda as his own daughter, and they shared a cabin that winter and would take dinner together each night.

“How long do you intend to live as a girl? You are young but eventually you will start to grow a beard and look more and more like a man. You can’t delay the inevitable.”

“I wish I could, Doctor Hall.”

“I am sorry, child. You are quite the young woman and the Regiment thinks the world of you. This war won’t last forever and eventually you will have to return to being a young man.”

“Samuel told me of an old slave woman who knew magic and actually turned a boy into a pretty girl. Do you know of that?”

“Don’t be foolish, Lucinda. I am a man of science and knowledge. Magic like that doesn’t exist.”

Despite Dr. Hall’s foreboding predictions, he was delighted to escort his young surrogate daughter to the Second Corps ball, being held in a large circus tent. Dr. Hall wished he could help Lucinda become a woman for real, but medical science could not grant her desires. It could barely even treat diarrhea.

The young lady glowed in the torchlight in the dress she had worn for the Gettysburg ball. Douglas Howell was now a Captain, but was unfortunately in Philadelphia, recruiting and training a new battery

which he commanded. Numerous young officers filled her dance card but towards the end of the evening Major McMahon cut in on a Lieutenant from the 26th Michigan.

Lucinda looked in his eyes and saw something that she had never before noticed, a deep seated passion and more. They danced the rest of the night together, then walked arm in arm in the moonlight, Lucinda leaning against him for warmth in the late winter night. McMahon regaled her with stories of serving as an officer in a Sepoy regiment because he was not high born to obtain a commission in the regular British army, and of Nipa, a lovely young Brahmin girl whom he fell in love with. The major showed Lucinda the Hindu Ganesh elephant talisman she had presented him on his departure from India which he constantly wore around his neck. Lucinda felt herself drawn to him and raised her lips to his and gave him a delicate but electric kiss. She felt entirely like a woman in his arms and did not want the night to end.

At midnight, another woods dripped with rain. The Division slogged through the mud as it repositioned itself at the middle of the Confederate trenches that snaked around the Spotsylvania Courthouse. The entire Second Corps would make a surprise assault before dawn, hoping to break the Army of Northern Virginia once and for all.

The men lay down in the soaking grass in a massive assaulting column, with McMahon at the head of the regiment, sandwiched between the 26th Michigan and 140th Pennsylvania. Not a word was spoken other than a heated argument between a frustrated General Barlow, the commander of the division, and General Morgan, the Corps Chief of Staff and the Di-

vision's guide, who had barely a clue where the Confederate lines were.

Finally, the wait was over and the Division lurched forward in the growing dawn. Seeing a row of abatis, felled trees with interlocking sharpened branches, they knew they had found the main Confederate line, broke into a run and initiated the most relentless bloodletting seen on the North American continent since the days of the Aztec emperors.

For hours Lucinda and Samuel lugged crates of rifle cartridges to the Union line mere feet from the Confederates on the other side of the trench. The demand for ammunition was relentless as the opponents literally fired in each other's faces. The rain started to pour and Lucinda was covered in the red Virginia mud that was starting to mix with the blood flowing off the outer face of the earthworks. Mercifully, the regiment was relieved after hours of fighting, and drifted away from the raging battle, only to be called back into action, with the 26th Michigan and 61st New York, and ordered to crawl along the earthworks until they emerged at an upswale. They sprang into the Confederate trenches at the Bloody Angle and for half an hour the three regiments fired as fast as they could for their very survival but were fearfully cut-up when they were relieved by soldiers from a New Jersey brigade.

Michael McMahan had witnessed savagery in the Sepoy Mutiny, but never had seen such violence confined to a small area in which oak trees had been felled by rifle fire and corpses were reduced to red stains with fragments of shoes and belt buckles. For the first time in years he felt fear, and sought the one thing that would ease his fear, Lucinda.

Lucinda huddled in her Army overcoat to shield against the rain, while lying on a rubberized Army poncho. She was exhausted and filthy, but could not sleep. She sensed a man kneeling next to her in the darkness, who then started stroking her mud-streaked face. Lucinda made no objection at McMahan's caresses, nor did she object when he rolled her onto her belly and removed her ladies bloomers under her skirt. Lucinda started to breathe deeply, knowing the moment of truth soon would be upon her. She felt coldness probing between her cheeks. McMahan had obtained some lard from the regimental cook and he greased Lucinda's nether region until he mounted her like his bay mare. Lucinda gritted her teeth as he entered her, but quickly her pain subsided into pleasure. She wanted to shriek out in joy but she stifled her moans as they were surrounded by thousands of soldiers.

McMahan had thrust his sword into three Confederates across the trenches that day, and now thrust with equal savage intensity into the young girl. He needed to release the fear and sorrow that gripped his heart, and delighted at Lucinda's meeting his thrusts with her own as she welcomed his cock in her ass. Finally he came inside her and for the moment he felt whole again.

By the time of the disastrous attack at Cold Harbor two weeks after the Spotsylvania carnage, it was evident that Lucinda was the Major's woman, ending her career as the regimental mascot. She continually braved sniper fire in the trenches, bringing water to the sweltering soldiers, but even the bounty men resented her presence, and told her to go to the rear where she belonged, away from the death and dying, which was their exclusive province.

Lucinda was deeply hurt at the Regiment's rejection, but deeply in love with the Major, who took her like his woman as often as possible. She had even learned to satisfy him with her mouth and tongue in the woods, and savored his manly essence when he flooded her throat with his seed.

"How could an entire division disappear?" Lucinda wondered, as she trudged in the wake of the Corps as it marched towards Petersburg below the James River, where the army had just crossed. Unbeknownst to Lucinda, the First Division had taken the wrong road to Petersburg and was actually marching away from the impending battle. The Army of the Potomac had finally escaped the grip of the Army of Northern Virginia and was on the verge of complete victory. If Petersburg and its rail network fell, Richmond would fall.

At midnight, with a bright moon showing, Lucinda found the Second Division occupying a stretch of massive Confederate earthworks. Encountering men she knew from the 7th Michigan, they told her that the city was virtually undefended, but the generals had lost their nerve on the verge of total victory.

Lucinda stared into the shadowy night at the spires of Petersburg, the city where the woman with the power to turn her into a real woman allegedly lived, and which now held the key to the entire war in the east. The city had called to her for over a year, and now it beckoned her forward.

"What is the sign and countersign?" Lucinda asked one of the Michigan troopers.

"Why, where are you going, Missy?"

“Into Petersburg. You said we could walk in there tonight. That is exactly what I intend to do.”

“Are you insane?”

“I’m a girl, they won’t think a Yankee girl would walk into their lines. So what is the sign and counter-sign?”

“Beast and Butler.”

“And what is that town we came through on the James?”

“I think they called it City Point.”

“I hope to be back in the morning.” She handed the soldiers her cavalry tunic and forage cap.

“I hope so too. I wish Hancock still had your spunk.”

Lucinda thought of the dual meaning of spunk and thought of Major McMahan. She was trying to save him as well as her estranged regiment that she equally loved with all her heart. If the Army stalled any longer, the Confederates would reinforce the city and massacre the Union assaults from the protection of their trenches. She knew that she would not find the mythical woman that night, but she had to go to Petersburg.

Lucinda quietly and calmly made her way through the fort that the Second Division occupied and walked across no man’s land towards the Confederate lines. Serving at Chimborazo had taught her the finer nuances of the Southern Virginia accent, and she called out to the Confederate lines.

“Please, I am trying to make my way to Petersburg. The Yankees are at our home in City Point and they won’t let me through, the savages.”

“Come in slow with your hands up.”

Lucinda did as ordered and soon was in the Confederate trenches, manned by old men and boys from the local reserves. The soldiers looked incredibly fearful that the Yankees would attack at dawn and easily overrun them and kill them all.

“How do I get to town in the dark?”

“Keep going uphill past the cemetery and Blandford Church. Once you are past that, you will be in the city.”

Lucinda did as suggested, and passed through the church’s cemetery, feeling a chill as she felt the ghosts of the departed watched her in the night. An owl hooted on a gnarled tree that caused her to nearly jump out of her skin. She felt incredibly foolish, but she had already come this far and needed to push on.

The city of Petersburg was in a state of panic. Slaves packed wagons high with luggage and furniture as the people who could leave were trying to get out of the city when they could. Gangs of slaves with picks and shovels marched through the city to dig new trenches. The provost guards rounded up straggling soldiers and pushed them at gunpoint back towards the city’s defenses. Nobody had time to pay attention to a wayward girl.

Lucinda found an alley and crouched down in the shadows. She was used to sleeping on the ground

and in her exhausted state slept soundly in the embattled Confederate City. At dawn she awoke and began searching for the object of her quest, finding it in a stand outside a general store. She purchased the item, but had to explain to the vendor that her family traded with the Yankees as the reason she had only Union greenbacks. Besides she joked, Confederate money was only good to line cat litter boxes, or the bottom of the family's canary cage.

The vendor heartily agreed and wished the young lady well before the Yankees stormed the city.

Lucinda retraced her steps to the Blandford church, but then on top of the hill took a sharp right oblique, ensuring that she would not pass through the same lines which she had entered earlier that night. She had witnessed a Confederate brigade marching through town and knew that she had to make haste before Lee's veterans massacred the men in the union assault, including Major McMahon and the men of the 250th Pennsylvania.

"When are you going to attack?" she questioned the old men and boys in the trenches. "The Yankees are in my family's home in City Point. You must drive them away."

"Missy, we will be lucky to stop them when they attack. We are not going to be attacking the Yankees anytime soon."

"Well then I must get back to my family. If you aren't going to attack, I am going through their lines."

"Fool girl, you will get yourself killed."

Lucinda was used to being called a fool girl, and ignored the insult as she clambered over the parapet and made her way back to the Union lines.

“Beast,” she yelled out.

“Butler,” a soldier responded.

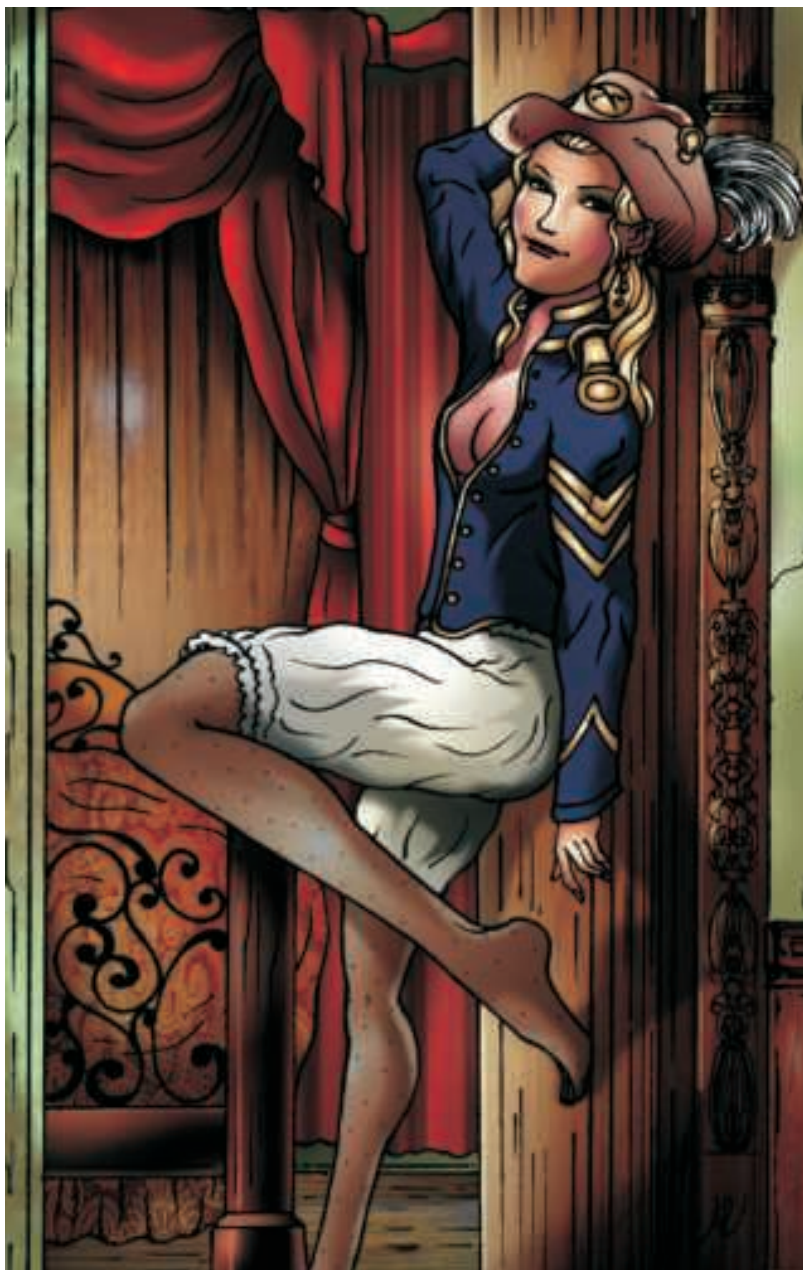
“I am a girl, I’m coming in.”

“That’s obvious,” the soldier laughed.

In the Union lines she showed the officer her purchase. She had entered the lines of the 40th New York of the Third Division and was immediately taken to General Birney, the Commander. From there she was escorted to General Meade, the Commanding General of the Army of the Potomac. General Grant was present at Meade’s headquarter’s tent and was very agitated. One of his staff, a Seneca Indian, saw General Birney standing with a shy young girl and asked what brought them to headquarters. Lucinda showed them her purchase, and the Seneca cursed aloud. He took her roughly by the hand and presented her to General Grant.

The General saw Lucinda’s purchase, and a deep flame came across his eyes. Lucinda had purchased the June 16 copy of The Daily Express, that day’s issue of the Petersburg newspaper. A mere girl had walked in and out of the Confederate lines where his generals had faltered.

The attack that should have taken place hours before finally went forward late in the afternoon. Major McMahon led the Regiment over the Confederate parapet but was immediately riddled with a volley from the defenders. The Union troops occupied the



trenches, but the Confederates were solidly entrenched in a second line and the attack could go no farther.

McMahon's body was only recognizable by the tattered remains of an officer's frock coat when Lucinda discovered him where he fell. She turned the corpse on its back and felt the bile enter her throat at she looked at his destroyed face. She had to press on. Lucinda felt through the bloody remains of his frock coat and undershirt until she found the Ganesh pendant that the Brahmin girl, Nipa, had presented to her lover. She then took a penknife and cut away his red cloth Corps badge, put it in her shirt pocket and walked away from the day-late-and-dollar-short Army of the Potomac, never to return.

In less than a month, Lucinda wore a Cavalry tunic with brass shoulder plates, a Hardee hat with a feathered plume, bloomers, and black stockings in a parody of a soldier. Sal Austin's prediction was true, Lucinda was in high demand as a whore in Washington's most exclusive and notorious brothel. Mrs. Austin was kindly to her girls and taught Lucinda the art of makeup, so that she now shone with an intense feminine sexuality that men found irresistible. Word had quickly spread of Lucinda's presence at Sal's and now she had a steady stream of men willing to pluck her rosebud. In receiving the assault of the army of hard cocks, she had forgotten about Major McMahon and the Army of the Potomac, now stuck besieging Petersburg when it could have taken the city without a fight.

Once, Sal had staged a mock cavalry battle with the girls riding piggyback on a group of politicians while they struck each other with bamboo poles in-

stead of sabers. Lucinda easily won that battle and was repeatedly taken by the politicians who had served as the Cavalry mounts and who gleefully observed that her ass was as tight as any cunny that they had ever entered. Finally, Lucinda had been victorious on a battlefield.

The whore excelled at her new vocation which fanned her desire for cock into an intense heat like the crucibles in her father's iron smelting operation. She had also developed a taste for champagne and cocaine which she kept in a silver vial and inhaled prior to rutting with a gentlemen caller as the men were euphemistically called, for they were certainly not gentlemen when they were at Sal's.

"Hello there, little soldier girl. Are you the she-he that Mrs. Austin told me about?" a congressman from Missouri asked Lucinda who posed seductively on a divan in the parlor. "Because I want to ride you hard and put you away wet."

"How do you know that I won't buck you off?" Lucinda coyly challenged.

"Try bucking me off with this inside you," the congressman leered, taking Lucinda's gloved hand and leading it to his crotch and engorged member.

"Mmmmm, a true stallion. Well sir, I will be your mare."

The congressman was a man of the frontier, rough and uncouth, and Lucinda thrilled to be led up the stairs by him. In her desire, she did not want a gentleman but a brute that would bring out the woman in her in all of its glory. Lucinda went to her dresser

and opened the silver vial of cocaine, hungrily taking two snorts.

“The little soldier girl she-he is an addict. I like that,” the congressman grinned savagely while removing Lucinda’s hat and roughly pawing at her bust. Sal Austin had breast forms made for Lucinda, silk bags with bird seed that gave her the heft and feel of real bosoms, and she thrilled to the man’s rough hands. Lucinda went back to the dresser and grabbed a small glass bottle of olive oil and removed the cork, detecting its scent.

“Remove your trousers,” Lucinda ordered.

The man complied and Lucinda lubricated his member with the olive oil, then tasted it with her tongue. She then positioned herself on all fours on her bed and removed her bloomers, exposing her waiting rosebud to the man, who wasted no time in thrusting into the whore. Lucinda shrieked in delight at the man’s invasion and pushed her ass against him, forcing him deeper and deeper inside of her. The man slapped her ass with his palm, like he was riding his prize mare and uttered obscenities that delighted Lucinda.

“You nasty little whore, take my cock.”

“Yes, yes,” Lucinda responded, “I am your whore.”

The man then shuddered, emptying his seed into Lucinda’s ass, much to her joy.

The war seemed far away at that moment for Lucinda, with a man’s warm spunk inside her ratifying her womanhood and helping her on way to financial independence, but the war would not let her go.

“I’m glad I came here tonight to ride you there, you little bitch, because I’m leaving town. General Early is outside the city. Tomorrow you should have Confederates lined up around the corner to pay for you and the other girls.”

The whore did not immediately get up and follow the man downstairs for the second course of the evening. Instead she lay in bed for several minutes. She had been a part of the war since joining the 250th back in Philadelphia, but now she knew a way to help win it, once and for all, and here there was no McLellan or Hooker to prevent her victory.

Lucinda washed her face in a basin, then did her makeup in an exquisite manner; lip rouge, powder, and kohl lined eyes. She then brushed her hair out, and put on clean bloomers and stockings, tightening the garters around her thighs. A corset, camisole and petticoats completed her undergarments, then she donned a striking emerald dress with a matching hat with a veil and ostrich plume. She looked at herself in the mirror over her dresser and saw a fashionable young prostitute smiling back. The soiled dove then made her way down the grand staircase and immediately caught the attention of Mrs. Austin, who did not expect to see her prized young harlot dressed to go out into the city.

“Dearie, what are you doing? The night is still young and those two gentlemen by the bar want to make your acquaintance. They are partners in the cotton trade and want to share you, front and rear.”

Lucinda licked her lips at the thought and felt a tingling in her ass. “That is very tempting, but I am going out to save your business, Mrs. Austin, Early is

outside the city and the Confederate Army doesn't have a pot to piss in."

Lucinda grabbed a parasol from a stand in the foyer and gave the doorman a pleasant good evening as she stepped out and walked back towards the war.

Feeling the bright sun in her face, Lucinda marched confidently towards the outskirts of the city, flirting with all the men. "I spend too much time indoors nowadays, but I guess that is the fate of an upstairs girl."

Lucinda slept soundly late into the next morning behind a bombproof at Fort Stevens, part of the Washington defenses. She felt the sun on her face and heard the rattle of musketry and the explosion of the heavy guns firing their massive shells at the distant Confederate lines. An experienced campaigner, she knew these were not the sounds of an actual assault, and pulled a gray soldier's blanket up to her neck to ward off the chill of the morning dew in the grass.

An excited Colonel in command of a regiment of ninety-day volunteers excitedly ripped her blankets off and pulled her to her feet. Sleepy-eyed, she was then hustled to a group of officers, including General Wright in command of the newly arrived Sixth Corps whom she recognized. Additionally, she recognized the tall gaunt civilian in a black suit and stovepipe hat that practically begged to be a target of the Confederate sharpshooters and Douglas Howell. The young Captain was in temporary command of a battery of the large siege guns thundering away at their tepid besiegers who seemed in no hurry to swoop down and take the city which could have been theirs before noon.

“Here she is, Mr. President, the young lady I told you about. She came to me last night and told me of her plan, and returned to our lines early this morning,” the Colonel excitedly reported.

The President looked over the young girl who shyly stood before him.

“And what was this plan Colonel Devers is talking about, young lady?”

“My plan, your majesty.” For all Lucinda’s daring the night before, she was always nervous around Lincoln.

“And what was your plan pray tell?” Lincoln warmly smiled.

“I went out to the Confederate lines last night and met General Rhodes who took me to General Early. I told them I was a loyal supporter of the Southern cause and it was my fervent desire to see their flag over the city.”

“An interesting sentiment, but hardly sound military strategy.”

“I also told them that Generals Morgan and Walker were at Sal Austin’s that afternoon for a quick tryst before the Second Corps started debarking. Even then Miles’s brigade was coming off their transports from City Point, that they must attack immediately or all would be lost and that the hated Yankees would hold Washington. I then said I must leave but would hope to see them all at Mrs. Austin’s the next day.”

“And if General Early had listened to you, we would all be whistling Dixie.”

“Night was coming and nobody attacks at night. It’s not done.”

“So Early had all night to fret about reinforcements pouring into the city. He could have walked in here this morning, but you created indecision in his mind. Bravo. But tell me, why the continued references to Mrs. Austin’s renowned establishment.”

“Because I am a sporting woman.”

Captain Howell looked crestfallen at that news, but the President looked completely non-plussed.

“More like a sporting child if you ask my opinion. You would reference the Second Corps staff wouldn’t you, Miss Fairchild? From a daughter of the regiment to a daughter of Eve. Please see me in my office at the White House tonight at 8:00. As the President of the United States, I expect my appointments to be prompt. My secretaries Hay and Nicolay will be expecting you. We have much to discuss. Come gentlemen,” Lincoln beckoned to his former law clerks, “there is nothing more to see or do here that General Wright cannot handle. General Early has no more chance of taking Washington now than he does Paris or Timbuktu.” Lincoln then confidently strode out of the fort to his waiting horse.

Lucinda meekly presented herself at the President’s office, where Messrs. Hay and Nicolay greeted her with warm, welcoming grins. Mr. Hay opened the door and Lucinda saw the President standing at the window, looking at the darkened city.

“Welcome, Miss Fairchild. Please take a seat,” he beckoned to a chair in front of an expansive, mahog-

any desk, overflowing with correspondence. Lucinda sat and Lincoln took his seat across from her.

“Now for the first order of business. I do not believe that working as a fallen angel at Mrs. Austin’s establishment is an appropriate endeavor for the heir to the Blankenship Iron Works in Philadelphia, despite that house’s reputation. Therefore, I ordered Mr. Hay to visit Mrs. Austin this afternoon and present her with \$500 on condition that she never let you work there again. You have been bought out. Should you persist in this foolishness at other houses I will continue to spend money that should be better used for hardtack and cartridges to prevent you from ever again selling yourself. It’s strange though, Mr. Hay tarried far longer at Mrs. Austin’s than necessary for a simple errand. He seems to relish the work of making you an honest young lady.”

“But you know that I am not a lady. You just said so yourself. How did you find out?” Lucinda asked, like a little girl whose hand had been caught in the cookie jar of her mother’s kitchen.

“Charlotte Hall told me about you at the Gettysburg ball. It is surprising how forthcoming people are with you once you are president. Nonetheless she thinks the world of you and regards you as her own daughter. Elizabeth Blankenship, however, is your true mother and I have a heartfelt letter from her dated from 1862 stating that she fears that you have run away to join the Union Army and that she is heartsick that she does not know your whereabouts or your fate.”

Lucinda looked on in silence, tears forming at the corner of her eyes.

“You have placed a terrible burden on me, but I have many such burdens. But I ask you, do you want to continue living as Lucinda Fairchild or do you want to go back to being Thomas Blankenship? I have two letters of recommendation that I have composed, one stating that Thomas Blankenship is a young man of incredible courage, resourcefulness, intelligence and honor, another one cites the same qualities for Miss Lucinda Fairchild. They are signed A. Lincoln. I don’t know how valuable my recommendation will be in the future, but it is better than nothing.”

“But Mr. President, I am not a woman in body. I am young and slight but eventually I will grow into being a man, hairy and thick.”

“Young Captain Howell knows of your true identity, and he appeared smitten with you as the charming young lady you were at the ball. He appeared heartbroken to find that you had turned to whoring.”

“But I can’t be a woman for him forever, nor can I bear him the children that he so deserves.”

“So it seems you would remain a woman if you could, but you don’t believe that you can.”

Lucinda thought about Mr. Lincoln’s comment and finally answered, “Yes, Mr. President. I am a woman in heart and soul. But my mother...”

“I have composed a letter to Mrs. Blankenship, stating that I have learned that you served under an assumed name in the Eighty-First Pennsylvania, it was recruited in Philadelphia and is part of your brigade, and that you were tragically killed at Gettysburg fighting bravely alongside your comrades. War

is a terrible thing and I write countless letters like this to grieving mothers. I have also instructed the Superintendent of the cemetery at Gettysburg to add a grave stone to the Pennsylvania section and carve it with the name of T. Blankenship. Your mother will have a place to grieve your loss and find strength in your noble sacrifice.”

Lucinda’s tears flowed freely now. “And my body? I was not born a woman.”

“Well, then here is my recommendation for you. Young Lucinda, I am an old man now, and I have heard and seen many things in my life. As a lawyer in Illinois, I would regularly practice in the towns along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. The bars and wharves were full of tales from the river boaters, gamblers, whores like you used to be, slaves, and settlers, all heading into a new land. Stories came up from New Orleans of a strong magic that the slaves took from Africa, Voodoo they called it, strong enough to turn a young boy into a comely young girl. I heard several of these tales, one involved a young man who sought out one of the craft’s priestesses to turn his rival for a woman’s affections into a young woman himself. His rival was changed into a comely and wanton young girl who fell in love with the man who had her transformed, became his wife, and bore him several children. Although it sounds like an old wives’ tale, the unique plot twist lends an air of credibility to it. I am a lawyer by trade and am used to evaluating evidence. I also have learned where there is smoke there is fire and these stories persisted.”

Lincoln paused and smiled at the enthralled young lady. He then removed a purse from his desk drawer

with \$500 in gold coins. He counted the money and presented it to Lucinda.

“Lucinda Fairchild, this is a personal loan from me which I am sure you will pay back. You should be able to find me in my law practice in Springfield next year as I believe General McLellan will be the next president. A plucky and intelligent woman like yourself should be able to use my loan to grow rich on the illicit trade in New Orleans. You can sell a five-dollar bag of salt on the other side of Lake Pontchartrain for many times that. With your winning ways you will be a woman of means in no time while you pursue your quest for finding a practitioner of Voodoo who will turn you into what the Almighty meant you to be.”

“But Mr. President, that is so much money. I don’t deserve it.”

“I disagree, Miss Fairchild. So far your ledger includes saving a section of three-inch ordnance rifles that are far more valuable, possibly saving this city from General Early. I also heard from a frustrated General Grant that a young woman walked through the Confederate lines at Petersburg and given your proclivity, I suspect that was you as well. This is a truly small reimbursement for your services and I am exceptionally proud of you. In further recognition of those services, I am promoting you to Brevet Major in the U.S. Volunteers.

“You will need to throw some rank around with those corrupt Army louts in New Orleans so that you can better help Mrs. Martha Williams in her school for contrabands where I am ordering you to report. There is an army steamer leaving for the Crescent City tomorrow morning, the General Kearny. Be on it, Major Fairchild, my secretaries will write your or-

ders. It has been a true pleasure making your acquaintance Lucinda, you are a remarkable person, and I wish you God speed in your quest.”

Without any help from the President of the United States, Samuel had found the object of Lucinda’s search easily enough in the massive contraband camp at City Point which slaves from Petersburg were pouring into on a daily basis. A few questions in the camp brought Samuel to an old woman, Mary Parker, who smiled and confirmed that turning the little Yankee boy into a Yankee girl would be child’s play for a Voodoo priestess of her powers. She had been the one that turned the planter’s son into a beautiful young woman.

Relaxing on the massive wharf at City Point with a cane pole in hand, Samuel now waited to deliver his news to Dr. Hall after he completed his rounds at the hospital. Life had been easy for Samuel now that the campaign had gone into a state of siege around Petersburg. There were no more forced marches with obstinate mules and he could regularly disappear from the 250th to relax on the wharf and fish for the crappies that lived in droves in the shade under the wooden planks. Stevedores constantly went to and fro unloading boxes of crackers and cartridges and cheerfully called out to Samuel who fished alongside an unloaded barge full of gunpowder.

Unfortunately, while Samuel was killing time, time was killing him in the form of a clock attached to an explosive device hidden away on the gunpowder barge. The remarkably inept Confederate Secret Service had finally done something right in its grandiose fantasies to win the war. The resulting explosion was the largest the world had seen and would retain that

record for all of a month, before a regiment of Pennsylvania coal miners blew up the Confederate fort where Lucinda had crossed over into Petersburg and created a large crater that became a death trap for the assaulting union regiments abandoned by their drunken Division Commander. Fishing next to the ammunition barge, Samuel died instantly from the blast, blown to smithereens, happy and free.

Martha Williams, a hard-nosed New Englander, looked on Lucinda in barely concealed contempt, despite her sterling recommendation. Lucinda was still dressed in her bordello finery that she had paraded around the nation's capital. She liked being a comely woman. New Orleans had the reputation as the city where the whores were better dressed, better educated, and better spoken than the women of virtue and Lucinda had already discerned its reputation to be true, but she was not to be outdone by the local women of easy virtue. She had worked at Sal Austin's house and was now a Brevet Major in the Union army.

"I can't see why Mr. Lincoln has sent a woman of your sorts to me. You look more appropriate for one of the bawdy houses that this wretched city is full of rather than assisting me with my endeavors of raising people up from slavery."

"Mrs. Williams, I am an officer in the Union Army and promise that I will give you my full devotion. You have nothing to worry about me when it comes to my industry or decorum."

Lucinda took an equally harsh appraisal of Mrs. Martha Williams. Her heart was in the right place, but her purity and chastity had made her rigid and cold, and her students would never feel inspired by

her. Lucinda doubted whether she had ever felt a man's touch let alone tasted a cock in her mouth or felt one inside her. Moreover, Mrs. Williams had a limited understanding of the path up from slavery. The ability to read and write were just stepping stones to autonomy. The people needed skills and money. Most of all they needed a place where they would be valued as something more than day laborers or maids. The Southern planters would have them continue to toil in the fields and her father would have them sweep iron filings off the foundry floor for pennies a day.

In her own plight, Lucinda empathized with the students flocking to the new school, but went far and above the curriculum. As President Lincoln had suspected, Lucinda's enterprising ways and his generous loan soon bore substantial fruit in the illicit trade with the Confederacy. Fortunes were being made in New Orleans by the traders who were offering salt and Northern manufactured goods for cotton. In two months' time, Lucinda had enough money to start her own operation, using many of the people from the contraband camp to whom she offered good wages. The former slaves knew every bit of the countryside and circumvented the regular channels of white commerce, pilfering bales of cotton from storehouses, or delivering it to Lucinda rather than the intended party, then pleading ignorance. All Yankee traders looked the same and the money was just as good. Lucinda became known throughout the city as a sophisticated young woman who got things done. As an Army Major, she pushed back against the military bureaucracy and cultivated relationships among disaffected enlisted men who she formed into an unofficial detachment.

Purchasing a grand mansion that once belonged to a Confederate legislator who no longer had a constituency, Lucinda opened her doors to the thriving city and shone in the tropical sun. At nights, Lucinda's parlor was full of former slaves of all ages, to whom she read dime novels about the California Gold Rush and excerpts from the newspapers. In the afternoons, Lucinda started to receive gentleman callers whom her newly hired household staff would politely turn away after they dropped off their calling cards. The men would not approve of Lucinda's secret. Despite Lucinda's popularity, however, the African-American community was still reluctant to reveal the secrets of Voodoo to the young Yankee boy living as a vivacious young woman and met her inquiries with friendly silence.

Stung by short range canister before, the Confederates at Cedar Creek in the Shenandoah Valley had learned to go to ground before the Union batteries opened fire on them. Captain Howell had been assigned to Henry DuPont's Artillery Battalion in support of the artillery poor Eight Corps. That corps had been surprised in its tents in the pre-dawn hours of a foggy fall morning when a gray avalanche descended upon them. Captain Howell had repositioned four times already in order to give the retreating infantrymen a chance to escape but now the Confederates were almost upon his guns and his casualties were mounting among the men and horses. Their ace, close range canister, failed to stop the advancing infantry as it had many times before, and the victorious Confederates were soon in his battery, shooting the remaining limber horses and clubbing his battery men.

Captain Howell's horse reared from a wound in its flank and then fell heavily to the ground, breaking his leg and pinning him beneath its weight. The first wave of Confederates passed him by, but a General directed his orderly to assist the trapped Yankee battery commander.

“General Ramseur says you fought very well but you are now our prisoner, Captain. We should bag your whole army by ten o'clock.”

The Confederates did not bag the Union Army of the Shenandoah that morning, instead the Union turned the tides in a comeback that drove the Confederates from the battle field and recovered Captain Howell's abandoned guns. The Union cavalry that swept after the retreating Confederates were too late, however, to repatriate the captured Captain. He was sent to a prison camp in Salisbury, North Carolina and due to his weakened leg, could not attempt an escape.

The cold weather came to Salisbury and Captain Howell sat in his hut staring at the incessant rains alone in his thoughts which repeatedly went to Lucinda Fairchild. Day after day he wished he had taken her as his woman and he no longer cared whether she had worked as a whore in Sal Austin's brothel. If he could only see her once more he would be the man to give her the rogering that she deserved. He would not be a gentleman this time.

Lucinda huddled in her coat to shield her from the winter rain while leading her buckboard through the French Quarter. Mrs. Williams constantly complained about her activities and brazenness, but she had money to purchase medication and clothes for the students, and regularly obtained additional food

from an Army cook Sergeant. The streets were almost empty but Lucinda noticed a group of soldiers accosting a beautiful and well-dressed African girl about Lucinda's age.

"Sir, I am not a lady offering herself," the woman insisted, but the soldiers would not take no for an answer, and appeared emboldened by the rotgut whiskey that was freely peddled in the city.

"Excuse me, Private," Lucinda intervened, "if the young lady says she is not a whore, then she is not a whore. Do we need to put you up on charges?"

"And who are you?"

"I am Lucinda Fairchild, and a Major in the army."

"That is bullshit. You are just a girl."

"I was afraid you wouldn't believe me." Lucinda took her buggy whip and slashed him across the face.

"Come girl, climb aboard."

The girl leapt onto the buggy as Lucinda whipped her white horse into a gallop.

"Unfortunately, you should be careful of some of the soldiers in our army," Lucinda advised the young woman once the buggy had slowed several blocks from the scene. "Where do you live?"

The young lady gave a Canal Street address and directed Lucinda to take a right at the next intersection.

"I am sorry, what is your name? Forgive my rudeness."



“I am Augustine LeClerc, I am part Louisiana creole.”

“It’s a pleasure to meet you.”

“And you are Miss Lucinda, the Yankee boy that wants to be a girl.”

“I am afraid that is my notoriety, rather than for all the assistance I try to provide.”

“Your efforts have not been unnoticed. Especially by me.”

“You?”

“Did you expect your search to reveal an old crone with a bone in her nose and face paint? My family were practitioners of the craft of Voodoo for generations before they came to America. My mother taught me all she could before a runaway wagon crushed her. Our family recognizes the value of a formal education, but also respects the power of the ancient craft.”

“Can you?” Lucinda hesitated.

“I have never turned a boy into a girl before, but I know the spells. The Voodoo power is a power of nature and of spirit, and nature is at its most powerful on the new moon. The moon will be new in a week. Please come visit me at my home then.”

That night, Lucinda confronted Mabel, her maid.

“Why didn’t you tell me of Augustine LeClerc?”

“Because there are some in this city who would still imprison her as a witch. We told her about you

weeks ago. She would have come to you soon enough.”

A week later, Lucinda slowly made her way to the home of young Miss Leclerc who greeted her warmly at the threshold. “Come with me, Miss Lucinda. We will use my mother’s bedroom. Remember, you have to embrace the spell if it is to work properly.”

Augustine had Lucinda strip naked and lay on the bed, she then painted her face, breasts and genitals with ochre, and covered the remainder of her body with a light powder, bone from a long deceased woman. Lucinda had presented Augustine with Major McMahan’s red clover Corps badge, her most valued item as a token of her commitment, and then Augustine started the ancient chants.

Nothing happened, nothing at all.

Augustine continued her chants for an hour with no result, until around midnight Lucinda felt strange, and felt herself leave her body and hover over it. Augustine looked up at her now floating spirit and winked, not breaking her chanting.

Lucinda then noticed that her prone form had started to grow breasts, and that her maleness had started to shrink. Her breasts became bigger and bigger until Augustine looked at the floating Lucinda who nodded her approval. The vestigial remnants of Thomas Blankenship quickly disappeared into a woman’s crotch with an inviting tuft of pubic hair, and Lucinda’s hips had rounded, the better to bear children.

With daylight starting to shine through the window, Lucinda felt an overwhelming desire to rejoin

her new body, and in an instant felt the weight of her breasts, and the deepness of her vagina. She was truly a woman, and fell fast asleep.

Lucinda woke up the next evening wearing a woman's night shirt comfortably tucked into Augustine's bed.

"You are incredibly powerful. I owe you my life."

"In a way you do. I have heard you read stories of California each night in your parlor. Your maid says you intend to go there once the war is over. Take me with you. New Orleans will not be a good city to live for a woman like me once the Yankee troops leave."

"Of course you can come with me."

Captain Howell limped off the steamer in Annapolis, which had taken the freed prisoners from Wilmington, North Carolina up the Atlantic Coast and the Chesapeake Bay. Medical orderlies hurried the ragged, sick prisoners onto ambulances, but a well-dressed man called out Captain Howell by name.

"Captain Howell, my name is John Hay, and I give you President Lincoln's compliments, sir. He ordered Miss Fairchild to New Orleans. This war won't last much longer so he has reserved a cabin for you on the steamer Jamaica. You will find several changes of uniforms in the cabin. You will also find your Medal of Honor in your cabin for your service at Cedar Creek. He wants you to go to her. She deserves a young man like you."

Mr. Lincoln was dead, the New Orleans papers announced, and Lucinda felt heartsick. She would

never be able to return his five hundred dollars or show him the results of the ancient magic that he believed in. Victory was now bittersweet.

Lucinda sat depressed in her parlor for days, barely eating. She had fully become a woman, but did not feel like looking for a man to forget her sorrow. Three days after the news, Mabel poked her head into the parlor, smiling. "Miss Lucinda, there is an Artillery Captain here to see you and he refuses to leave. Shall I sick the dog on him?"

"An Artillery Captain? Ask him for his calling card."

"I did. He said he didn't have one, instead he gave me this." Mabel revealed a Medal of Honor in her palm, which made Lucinda's heart flutter.

"Please send him in, and leave us to our privacy."

"It's time for me to go to the market anyway," Mabel grinned. "I will bring us some crabs and shrimp."

"Miss Fairchild?"

"You shall address me as Major Fairchild," Lucinda joked.

Douglas briskly saluted her but then she broke her composure and embraced him with all her might.

"Douglas, it was wrong of me to become a whore. I am so sorry. But I have made it all good. I am a well-regarded woman in this town."

Douglas said nothing but instead gave her an arduous kiss on her mouth which lasted for minutes.

The war, Lincoln's death, everything was forgotten in that moment between the two lovers.

Coming up for air, Lucinda broke herself from Douglas's grip and took three steps back.

"I have a surprise for you, Douglas."

Lucinda started to strip her layers of clothing off to a lecherous Douglas until she was down to nothing but her corset and stockings. Her new breasts thrust proudly from her chest and her crotch was smooth and starting to drip in her lust. She then approached Douglas again, who finally he did not act like a gentleman. He pushed her onto her knees so that she was facing his crotch. He unfastened his suspenders, and unbuttoned his fly, revealing an engorged and insistent cock that demanded satisfaction from Lucinda's mouth. He grasped the back of her head and held her firmly in place until he exploded his essence deep into her throat. He had been fantasizing about this for months in the prison camp and now he had asserted his mastery over his woman.

Douglas then led her to the sofa and savored the sight of her dripping cunny. She cooed and he quietly, but inexorably, brought himself back to arousal. He then savagely thrust into Lucinda's womanhood, bringing forth a lustful shriek. Lucinda met his thrusts and urged him ever deeper and deeper until he deposited his seed into her deepest recesses.

The couple continued their mating into the early hours of the next morning. Just before Douglas passed out, he whispered, "Marry me, Lucinda. Be my wife. It is what I want."

“I will, I will Douglas. That was incredible. I will be your wife.”

Nine months later, Mrs. Lucinda Fairchild Howell gave birth to her eldest daughter, Caroline, in San Francisco, California. Augustine served as the midwife, before she enrolled in a medical school, supported by Lucinda. The newlywed couple had travelled to California with Lucinda’s household and Douglas now enrolled in college where he studied engineering. Douglas’s leadership and intelligence brought him the notice of the Transcontinental Railroad, and he took a year away from his studies to assist in the construction of the line over the Sierras. After a year as an assistant for the railroad engineer he impregnated Lucinda again for their second child when he returned to San Francisco. Upon his graduation from college, they moved to Los Angeles to establish a steel works at Long Beach financed in large part from Lucinda’s New Orleans money, and Lucinda bore their third and final child. The lovers never lost their passionate ardor, and Douglas never acted the gentleman in the boudoir, nor did Lucinda ever act the lady.

The Howells had walked from the Gettysburg National Cemetery along the length of Cemetery Ridge, to the large Pennsylvania Monument, where Thomas Blankenship’s name was inscribed among the fallen. Lucinda turned to her family which was awestruck at the life their mother had lived and of which they had almost no knowledge, Lucinda being of a modest and gentle nature.

“So do you still have President Lincoln’s loan?” Caroline asked her mother.

“Yes, I still carry it in my purse.” Lucinda opened her purse and showed her children a collection of shiny twenty dollar gold pieces with 1864 stamped on them.

“You have made that money many times over, Mother. I am sure Mr. Lincoln would approve if you donated it to a deserving party.”

“I believe you are right.”

Two nights later, on the Pullman car heading back to California, Lucinda spied an elderly African-American conductor.

“Excuse me, sir, were you in the war?”

“I was, Ma’am. At Chaffin’s Bluff.”

“Do you have any grandchildren?”

“A whole passel of them. The eldest wants to go to college and become a lawyer.”

Lucinda pressed the gold pieces into his hand.

“Abraham Lincoln gave me these gold pieces long ago, but he would have liked your grandson to have them. He will need it.”

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