

A Traitor Amongst Us

Prologue

The officer stood on the porch and watched as the wounded soldiers returned from the bloody battle. The Confederates had easily routed the Union troops sending them into a hasty retreat. The devastating defeat left many lingering questions about the so called, 90-day war. But one thing was clear, this war was not ending anytime soon.

He turned and opened the door to the small Washington house the Union army was using as a command center. With the exception of the one candle illuminating the center of the room, the house was dark, warm, and damp. He wrinkled his nose as he adjusted to the smell of bloodied flesh and fesses.

“This is your last chance rebel,” he explained calmly through his thick Scottish accent. “Tell me what your so-called general has planned. Where will they attack next?”

The man sat cramped and bound in the wooden racks, his face and body bloodied from the day long beating.

“I told you, I don’t know anything,” he cried. “The generals were supposed to meet President Davis in Alabama...” he screamed in-between sobs, “they’re supposed to discuss strategy. That’s all I know...I swear.”

“You sir are a liar,” responded the officer as he quickly backhanded the captured prisoner. The soldier’s head flew back, then forward, before slumping motionless in the harness. “You two, get some water and rouse his arse,” commanded the officer.

Immediately two soldiers stepped from the shadows and scurried out of the house intent on following orders. The officer stood over the unconscious Confederate soldier, pulled out a handkerchief from the buttoned jacket of his tweed uniform, and slowly wiped his brow.

“We need to find out about this bloody meeting Jeffrey,” he said while seemingly speaking into the darkness. “Use whatever means at your disposal. We must uncover those plans!”

“Yes Sir.”

“And Jeffrey, by the authority of General George McClellan, if you have an opportunity, end this bloody rebellion.”

“Yes Sir Mr. Pinkerton. I’ll leave immediately,” replied the voice from the shadows.

Stepping into the lighted part of the room he squinted from the glare caused by the brightly lit candle now partially melted atop the small wooden table.

As a young man in Maryland he had damaged the vision in his left eye after loading gunpowder into his masters rifle during a hunting trip. He would later escape and take up employment with a unique group of British soldiers fresh off their victory during the War of 1812. Their intimate knowledge of artillery and counterintelligence would form the foundation of his comprehension of science and explosives. Its these skills he would later use to help dozens of slaves escape slavery while simultaneously assisting the Union army end the war and slavery forever.

Opening the door to the house he scanned the now empty cobblestone street. Hours earlier the streets were packed with crowds of injured or dying Union soldiers retreating from the lopsided battle. Spectators and children alike hurried through the narrow side streets frantically seeking shelter after witnessing the clash. Now, those same streets were eerily quiet as the throngs of people sat in their candle illuminated homes and taverns while nervously discussing the day’s events.

Slipping over the porch rail he casually walked to the rear of the building before

quietly abandoning the main pathway leading away from the small wooden house. As he walked, he added extra turns and detours through the narrow side streets and alleyways, cautiously aware of the possibility of being followed.

In times past such maneuvers were not necessary however the enemy was now keenly aware of an unidentified but tangible advantage the Union army had on its side. It was not simply the north's vast infrastructure, strong diverse economy, or unified national resolve. It was a silent, almost unspoken advantage.

Although those wealthy southern landowners could not see it, they'd long felt the sting of a secret network. A network with the sole purpose of helping escaped slaves elude capture in their quest for freedom. The existence of this underground network would not only deprive the south of their much-needed labor force but would also create the beginnings of a fearless fighting group that would soon pit the recently escaped slaves against their former owners. And although Southerners could not find it on a map, explain its location or members, they had made several attempts to infiltrate the tightly knit group of abolitionists.

Recently, a bright-eyed young law clerk, Stewart McPherson, posing as a staunch abolitionist attempted to infiltrate the Washington based anti-slavery movement. It was not until a former slave, a Ms. Sally Suttenthworth, recognized the young man as one she had raised as a child, that his true identity was exposed. It did not take long for Jeffrey to uncover the man's intentions and connections with several local southern sympathizers. A younger and less experienced Conductor may have killed him outright however, Jeffrey, recognizing the benefit of letting him live, even if briefly, allowed him to move freely throughout the nation's capital.

Over the course of several weeks, Mr. McPherson contacted over a dozen

sympathizers living and working in the Washington DC area while unknowingly sharing his contacts and the names of those in top leadership. The information collected was more than the Conductors could have dreamed of obtaining. However, in recent weeks, Mr. McPherson had become bolder in his attempts to gather information. In lieu of Jeffrey's new assignment, it was time to eliminate the threat.

Crouching in the shadow of the tall wooden building Jeffrey looked out onto the brightly lit street lining the US capital construction project. The cranes and scaffolding surrounding the perimeter of the future capital ascended through the light mist hovering above the city. On the streets below, at the last lamp post stood the Confederate spy.

Jeffrey had intel that Stewart was planning to meet with a pair of southern loyalists expecting to receive a list of believed Conductors and safehouses associated with the local Underground Railroad. Off in the shadows stood the two plain clothes Confederate soldiers assigned to provide security for the transaction and to later escort the information across Confederate lines.

Watching him nervously pace between the last and first lamp post Jeffrey slowly knelt and opened the leather satchel slung over his shoulder. Pulling out the machine components he lined up each piece and gently locked each section together. Peering through the Thermal Imaging Scope he watched as the heat radiated from Stewart's body anxiously walking along the sidewalk. Locating the other two targets he carefully adjusted the scope ensuring they too were in focus. Once both men were properly lined up, he exhaled deeply and in one motion pulled the trigger. The bullets silently raced through the air leaving only the sound of the Rebs lifeless bodies hitting the cobblestone walkway. McPherson, seeing the two soldiers collapse, nervously turned left then right in an attempt to flee only to be overcome by the third and final bullet.

The aggressive armor piercing round easily ripped through the wool overcoat sending lead fragments into his back and exploding out his chest. The impact of the blast caused his body to fall forward before twisting and collapsing onto the stone walkway. After one last gurgled breath he laid there in the dim shadows silent. Born and bred into a life of death and violence, Jeffrey calmly retrieved the three brass ammo casings, disassembled the rifle, and placed the components back into his satchel.

After a quick survey of the street, he stepped from the shadows and scurried up the stone stairway across the street. Opening the door to the narrow three story building he stepped in and immediately climbed the creaky wooden stairway to the top floor. From the top of the stairwell he paused briefly, focusing on the silence of the building, before opening one of the two doors on the floor. The room was dark with a strong mildew smell likely caused by the single droplets of water dripping from the roof into the partially filled wooden bucket.

The single window in the small room allowed just enough moonlight to illuminate the scanty contents of the one-room apartment. With the exception of the bed, a chest, and a large, covered piece of furniture in the corner, the room was by design, void of any signs of life. Pulling out a large iron skeleton key from his satchel he inserted the device and turned it slowly until he heard a 'click.' Opening the wooden chest, he was greeted with second chest and another dial faced lock. As soon as he started to turn the dial a slow beeping sound began to chirp. He quickly turned the dial before it too clicked, popped open, and immediately stopped beeping.

Sifting through the cluttered chest, he pulled out a pair of jeans, t-shirt, an NYU sweatshirt, and pair of sneakers. Reaching deeper into the trunk he pulled out a wallet, cell phone, and a 9mm handgun. After getting dressed he removed the rifle components

from his bag and securely placed them in the bottom of the chest. Closing the lid he initiated the self-destruct sequence, secured the locks, and placed the contents in the satchel before swinging it over his shoulder. Turning to the large furniture cover in the corner of the room he quickly pulled the canvass tarp from atop the structure exposing a large wooden armoire with a lantern intricately carved on the front doors.

For the last time he stood there quietly while listening carefully for any signs of life in the partially abandoned building. Once satisfied he was the only person on the floor, he opened the Armoire door, stepped inside and gently closed the door behind him.