

ENCAMPMENT: A NOVEL OF RACE AND RECONCILIATION
EXCERPT
By Carl Eeman

Sunday, May 26, 1912

Savannah

A scowl scraped under the words, "What you doin' in this part o' town...boy?"
No answer.

From inside a loathing came, "Iffin' this was a ratt run country you'd be showin' me yo' massa's pass."

He echoed back, "Iffin' this was a ratt run country..."

He noticed the pavement was pretty warm, even when it clawed his palm and smeared itself with his blood. That hurt.

The toe of the black, worn-down brogan hurt too when it kicked his ribs.

Another pair of worn brogans came up, brown this time, and pulled the black pair around. "Hold on there, Dooley."

"You niggah-lovin' Longstreetin' bluebelly!"

Now came two pairs, some handsome men's half-boots under brown pinstriped cuffs, and a black pointy toe peeking out from under a dark green hem just above the sidewalk.

Brown brogans shifted back and forth. "Simmer down, Dooley. Ain't fitten' pushin' anybody 'round on the Lord's Day, 'specially with a lady present."

Black brogans turned toward green hem. A single word, "Ma'am," floated down; then the black brogans stomped away, the heels grinding the pavement, the left one worn down at an odd angle.

Half-boots and green hem passed by together and brown brogans trailed after.

He pulled out an old green kerchief and with black fingers pressed it against the pale, bloody palm. After he left, the rest of his blood turned dark on the pavement.



The Atlantic breeze ballooned the cigar-fumed drapes toward Zachariah, and he sneezed. It stunned him for a moment, but his headache was only grumpy. He bent over again and finished tying his shoes. Then he stood, buttoned his fly, and pulled his suspenders over his shoulders. In the open armoire opposite him hung a gray tunic with three gold chevrons on the sleeve and matching pants.

He took a deep breath and pulled his door open, but there was no one to face.

“Mawnin’, Mistah Hampton,” Alma said, coming in from her backyard visit. She was tying on a blue-checked full apron over her puff-sleeved blouse and long, bell-shaped navy blue skirt.

“Mawnin’ Alma.”

“Would you like a cup o’ coffee *today*, suh?” she asked, moving toward the stove. Zachariah wondered at her stress on “today.” “Yes, thank you kindly.”

He took the enameled tin cup out onto the front porch and dropped into the rocker. He heard a far-off church bell chime, then another. “Sunday?” He took a sip. Too hot.

He blew on his coffee and got down a slurp, staring at the white uprights of the porch railing. White. Evenly spaced. Ribs? What? No. Back porch steps...white, wet. Went down them. Up them. Minié bullets drumming on...the roof...and his shoulders...his slicker.

He got down a full gulp and closed his eyes. His stomach protested and he tasted bile in the back of his mouth. Almost gagged. Gagged after the steps...after a backyard crossing. There’d been a gray door...a gagging smell...cool air blowing on his bare backside...a bit of gray light from a crescent moon cut out. Squinting up the street he faintly heard horse hoof clops and motorcar clatter from Jones Street.

Emily and Lee rounded the corner at the end of the block onto Tattnell. Lee Thompson looked dapper in his brown, pin-striped Sunday suit and matching brown derby. He was a lean, angular man nearly six feet tall with short, black hair over pale skin. His dark, calm eyes set over angular cheekbones missed little. His wife Emily’s dark green skirt brushed her toes, while her white blouse rose chin-high at the collar. Her flower-trimmed hat shaded both her face and shoulders. Behind them, Zachariah could see the bobbing hat of a third figure. Occasionally Lee would say something over his shoulder. Meanwhile the clank of porcelain and silver through the dining room window announced Alma was laying out Sunday dinner.

Zachariah went to his room, slipped on his dark jacket and watched his fingers in the small shaving mirror loop on his tie. The face in the mirror showed flowing

eyebrows over gray-green eyes, a hawk nose between medium cheekbones and a full silver beard, second-button long.

Back in the kitchen, he found Alma peering into the oven. "Alma, I see Lee and Emily comin' up the street and someone else with 'em. I 'spect they'll be four fo' dinner today."

"Thank you, suh," Alma said. "I've already set an extra place."

"Bully, Alma," approved Zachariah, moving to the door. "Say, did it rain some yesterday?"

"In the mawnin' it sure did, Mistah Hampton. Thunder n' lightnin' and the rain beat down fierce for a time and lingered on past noon."

He passed through the hall to the parlor and pulled a Bible off the bookcase. He and St. Matthew were settled in a stuffed chair when the iron gate squeaked open. A moment later, Lee held open the front door to let Emily pass. Glancing over the top edge of the page, Zachariah saw Peyton Colby's profile floating over the words, "Blessed are the poor in spirit."

"Mmmm! Smells like dinner's 'bout ready," said Emily. "Lee, why don't you and Peyton go in the parlor? I'll send Alma in presently." She turned and called, "Alma? We're home. Come take my hat. Is everything ready?" Her voice faded toward the kitchen.

Lee hung Peyton's nondescript bowler on the hat rack next to his own brown crowner. They came in the parlor and stopped short when they saw Zachariah.

"Hello, Zack," Peyton said, stepping over with an outstretched hand as Zachariah moved to rise from his chair. "Oh don't get up. Sunday ain't *that* formal."

"Hullo, Peyton," Zachariah shook his hand. "Hello to you too, Lee."

"Readin' the Good Book I see," Lee commented as both he and Peyton took chairs.

"Yes, I am," Zachariah responded. "Sermon on the Mount. Who's blessed and how they're blessed. Always gives me a restful feelin' when I read it." Then he turned. "Peyton, what brings you here today? Were you at First Baptist?"

"Actually, I was walkin' home from Independent Presbyterian when I came 'cross that Dooley Culpepper pushin' 'round some blackie."

"Emily and I saw it too, coming up the street," Lee chimed in. "We were still humming 'Blest Be the Tie that Binds' and came across these three old men who should know better. Two of them shoulda had enough fightin' to last 'em their whole lives."

“What was it about?” Zachariah asked, although having heard Dooley’s name he had a fair guess.

“Nigh on as I can make out,” Peyton answered, “Dooley said somethin’ ‘bout how when things was right, white folks wouldn’t ever need to see dusky faces ‘cept workin’ the fields or keepin’ house. He said, ‘Iffin this was still a ratt-run country...”

Zachariah heard the rest and began to offer, “Well Longstreet would say...” when Alma broke in from the doorway. “Gentlemen, dinner’s ready.” Lee gave silent thanks being spared another quote from General James Longstreet, Zachariah’s long-ago commander and hero. He hoped this dinner they could stay in the twentieth century.

“Oh, do say it a bit more grandly, Alma,” Emily said from behind her. “Gentlemen, dinner is served!” She started a bit when not only Lee and Peyton but also her father rose and moved to the dining room. As Zachariah passed behind her heading to a side chair, she turned and said evenly, “Glad you could join us, Daddy.” He nodded back but dared only look up as high as the cameo brooch standing between her chin and collarbone on the stiff collar. Her dark brown hair was up off her neck and framed her spare, engaging face and hazel eyes.

After grace, Colby ventured, “So what was your preacher’s theme today and what did he say about it?”

Emily turned back a harsh thought about her father’s morning absence and said, “Reverend McWilliams preached on ‘Blessed are the peacemakers’ from Matthew chapter five.”

“Do you think he was aiming that at anyone special in the church?” Lee asked, sipping his iced tea. Emily arched an eyebrow. “If you mean that set-to in the altar guild and Libby Pocklington...well, he was very careful not to look at any one of them.”

“Libby Pocklington is a hard case to look in the eye,” Zachariah remarked casually to Peyton, never looking left.

“She happens to be right in this case,” Emily answered, glancing at her father’s profile. “There’s no reason for wax paper under the altar candles. That Rachel Collins just doesn’t want to stay after and scrape off the drippings.”

“So how would you be a peacemaker between Libby and Rachel?” Peyton asked carefully.

Emily eyed the men. Peyton was all innocence, but both Lee and her father were uncommonly attentive. They both knew Emily was trying to stay on both women’s good sides and move up into their circle. She looked back at Peyton thoughtfully and

said, "I'd take it to Reverend McWilliams and suggest First Baptist spend an extra dollar a month on those new, dripless candles Pauline saw last winter in Boston."

"Bravo," Lee exclaimed, spearing a couple of sliced carrots. "Make peace by taking away the cause of contention." As soon as he said "cause" he groaned inwardly. Zachariah missed Lee's wince as he spoke on.

"You know, the way Libby and Rachel square off is like a Lost Cause hothead havin' to shake hands with a Yankee."

Peyton chimed in. "Old Dooley goes off like a sulfur match 'bout the Lost Cause anytime."

"Them Lost Cause fellers and the Reconstruction men between 'em almost murdered Longstreet in New Orleans after the War," Zachariah said earnestly to Lee and Peyton.

With a sigh, Emily looked down at her plate. "And how was that, Daddy?"

"Longstreet walked out into the middle of a New Orleans riot when the secession boys were shooting every colored they saw. Longstreet was tryin' to make peace and he was almost shot by some Confederates he'd once commanded."

Lee and Emily hadn't heard this one before. Their eyes met, exchanging the thought that Zachariah was tracking this conversation rather well.

"Miz Emily," Colby answered, "I think yo' idea of them dripless candles is a much safer way a-bein' a peacemaker." Emily smiled.

Lee piped up. "You know, Zack, given what Longstreet was up against, maybe that's why the good Lord *blessed* the peacemakers, because He knew they'd catch it from both sides."

"Could be," Zachariah answered, while everyone waited for him to chew down the last of his pot roast. "Never know with them Yankees. Hard enough hearin' 'em 'round town these days in the shops and along the docks, let alone puttin' up with them bluebellies from my day."

As Alma cleared the dishes and brought in cobbler, Emily said with a sweet malice, "Thank you again, Peyton, for...helping Daddy home from the regimental dinner Friday night."

Zachariah eyed the centerpiece, remembering the flasks littering the tables. He frowned, remembering pools of sidewalk lights, some stairs, and...his room. But that had been Friday...and this was definitely Sunday. So Saturday had...

Emily's voice broke into his staring. "Peyton, do you think after forty six annual regimental dinners the drinking might ever start easing off? Or are some of the men too much in the habit?"

Peyton gulped. “Well, Miz Emily I don’t rightly see how the 8th Georgia could keep its hard fightin’, hard drinkin’ name if we ever did. Not sayin’ some fellers like Dooley don’t indulge a bit too often, but, uh...” Now *he* couldn’t look at Emily either, or Zack for that matter, and the pause grew awkward.

“You know Emily,” Lee broke in, “Sunday bein’ a day of rest I wonder if old Peyton and Zack might feel like an afternoon nap today?”

Peyton stretched and allowed how he really needed to head for home for just such a nap. After he left, Zachariah headed for his room and missed the sound of Emily’s quick steps heading across the hall into the parlor under her skirt swish. Lee heard and went after her, knowing from her walk she was upset. Emily greeted him from the settee with, “Why? Why always the old soldier talk? It’s been fifty years!” A tear slipped past her poise.

As he sat down next to her he said, “Maybe he misses...”

“Misses?” she snapped. “Every month there’s some bourbon-splashed, regimental something. He lives under our roof, but how can that galoot Bob Bidwell or that four-flushing rascal Dooley Culpepper see him as much as we do?”

Lee tried again. “I meant maybe he misses some of those who didn’t come back.”

Emily’s frustration and temper brought her to her feet. “He’d rather be with a dead one of them than with Mama when she was dying.” Her self-control crumbled and Lee took her in his arms as she sobbed.

“Now, Emily, you know that’s not fair. It was unfortunate but not his fault.”

“But he should have been here; at least...my heart says he should have been.”

“I expect his heart says the same. He loved her...and he loves you.”

She turned around in his arms so he wouldn’t see her face as she choked out, “He loves those flasks most of all.”

West Side, Savannah

“Ow!” yipped Lucius Robinson.

“I’m sorry, Papa,” Beulah said, gently daubing with a wet cloth over a bowl of water. “But that’s a nasty scrape on yo’ palm and we gotta clean it.”

“I know dat, hunnybun,” Lucius answered, “but it still smarts.” He hissed through his teeth as she blotted the red-raw skin dry with a towel.

“Hannah gal,” Beulah called, “you found that salve yet?”

Eleven-year-old Hannah came scampering into the kitchen, all pigtailed and Sunday shoes. "Here it is, Momma."

"Now take a dab of salve and spread it gentle as you can on Grandpop's palm where it's all red." Beulah tucked Lucius' brawny forearm under her own ebony arm and pulled him snugly against her side.

Hannah popped the cover off the metal can. She gingerly dipped two fingers into the gooey mass, wrinkling her nose at the camphor aroma. She turned her earnest, dark brown eyes to her grandfather. "I'll try to be as easy as I can."

"I know you will," Lucius said. Hannah gave him a small smile, then spread the salve. Lucius winced but held his hand steady, then sighed. "Ooo, that's nice an' cool."

"Good," Beulah said. "Now Hannah, hand me that folded kerchief, and put a bit of salve on it too." Beulah gently landed the cloth squarely on her father-in-law's palm, then took another handkerchief and draped it over both sides. "Turn yo' hand over, Papa," she said, loosening her hold. As he did she snugged up the handkerchief and tied a firm knot below his knuckles, trying to keep a gentle pressure.

"How's that?" she asked.

Lucius flexed his creaky fingers cautiously. "Pretty fair. You and yo' nurse here do ratt fine medicine. I'm 'bliged."

Hannah lifted her chin and crowed, "The Momma an' Hannah Colored-Folk Clinic is proud to be of service to our fellow man." Beulah giggled as Hannah finished, "That'll be one cent or two eggs, payable by Friday. We cain't run this here clinic for charity 'cept for poor folk, which you ain't."

Lucius wiggled his tightly curled eyebrows at her, then dug his good hand into a pocket of his overalls. He pulled out a new penny and expertly mounted it on his thumb. "Mistah Lincoln," he said to the coin, "you keep company now with Hannah." He flicked his thumb. She caught the coin and slapped it onto the back of her left hand.

She lifted her right and exclaimed, "It's hails, Grandpa. That's good luck. Thank you." She stepped up and gave him a quick peck on the cheek, then skipped off to find her cigar box of treasures.

"Put the lid back..." Beulah began, while Hannah's pigtailed scampered out of sight. "...on the can of salve," she finished. She shook her head. "Oh I'll do it."

Lucius picked up the washbowl with his good hand, bumped the screen door open and heaved the cool, slightly bloody water into the back yard.

Beulah wiped her hands dry on her apron. She was lean, with shoulder-length black hair falling in wiry locks that framed an angular face. Her warm, brown eyes were darker than her mahogany cheeks and were large for her narrow nose. Her mouth was wide with delicate, often-smiling lips. “You shouldn’ta given Hannah that penny. It’s gonna spoil her into thinkin’ she’ll get paid for’ doin’ what she ought.”

“One penny ain’t goin’ ta spoil that girl,” Lucius answered. “An’ don’t start with me ‘bout principles and ‘zamples neither. Grandpops get to swap small kindnesses with their granchillun, don’t they?”

“I s’pose,” Beulah answered, turning back to supper. “Well the rice and beans are gettin’ done and everybody’ll be here soon. You go out on the front poach an’ set a spell with Rufus. There’s a nice breeze tonight.”

Tree shadows were slanting across the street as Lucius stepped onto the porch. He resumed his usual humming, crossed over the spongy boards to the far corner, and sat down in his rocker. With an airy cane seat and back it never felt sticky or sweaty even on sultry days. The cane-weaving was a bit slack near the top, encouraging dozing. The hickory runners had worn a faint pair of tracks in the porch floor. This was his usual spot, in the shade of the big camellia bush where he watched life go by on Savannah’s west side.

Rufus was sitting in a ladder-back chair tilted back against the house between the door and the rocker, eyes closed and letting the breeze work over his face, listening to his father hum.

“I know what yo’ thinkin’ ‘bout tonight,” Lucius said rocking briskly.

“I know you know,” Rufus answered, opening his eyes. “It’s been so long comin’ I can hardly b’lieve tomorrow’s the day.”

“Think you and Beulah’ll get any sleep?”

“I won’t. I’m ‘bout as keyed up as a seventeen-year locust lookin’ for love.”

Lucius struggled hard to muster up his excitement to match Rufus’ as he asked in an edgy way, “Now, you sure you got everything covered?”

“Far as I can make out, we got it down to the penny,” Rufus answered.

“Goin’ over it again tonight?”

“Probably another ten times out loud.”

“I’m hopin’ for you, Rufus,” he said with his eyes watery. Lucius’ spirit was a wet log on a fire, steaming and sputtering instead of burning bright.

“Thanks Pop,” Rufus answered intently.

About the time Beulah had finished bandaging Lucius' hand, Alma was walking home from the Thompson's. Sea gulls were feasting at the rail yard garbage dump as she came up Broad Street. The crossing gate clanged down at Liberty with warning bells. The Atlantic Coast Line 5:22 rang its bell in reply and blew a long note on its whistle. The gulls rose in a cloud of squawking flappery, roundly protesting the interruption.

She walked another three blocks by their short ends and then turned onto Fahm Street. After a block and half of jaded houses the long way north, she turned in at her gate and came up the path to a sagging front porch.

After twenty-four years of scavenging for bits and pieces, the house had risen to "dilapidated." It rested on cinder blocks, some permanently charred black from a fire. Scraps of tarpaper quilted the roof. A too-thick board bulged into an accidental sill on the south side, unable to hide under a weather-beaten coat of pale green paint. An ugly pair of high-mounted square windows flanked a six-panel front door that looked salvaged from the hall of a seedy hotel. The rotting base of the far porch post made it lean toward the camellia bush at the corner, but the old man sitting in a rocker seemed unworried as he talked gravely to a younger man.

Alma had often seen the two of them talking like this, although usually not looking so serious. The stocky one, well worn by the years, with a full, silver-white beard that reached down to armpit level, was obviously good friends with the rocker and the big bush at the porch corner. He had a kerchief tied as a bandage around his hand, and his dark, lively eyes with easy-going smile lines were damp tonight.

The other man was sitting in a kitchen-ordinary brown chair. He was three decades younger, taller and leaner, and his sleeves were rolled up, showing off sinewy forearms in a chestnut shade and long muscular fingers. This man's mouth and jaw were more jutting, and not just because the other was getting old-age jowly, although the two had similar eyes and matching noses. His eyes were brown, in a slightly-creamed coffee hue that was very appealing.

Alma bounced up the jouncing steps and gave them a big smile. "Hi, Daddy," she said, pecking Rufus's cheek, her eyes a perfect match for his. "Hello Grampa." She gave him a matching peck and smiled an extra notch.

Lucius scratched her chin and his eyes twinkled. "My beard still makes you giggle, don't it?"

“Always has,” she answered warmly. It was true. In the crib Alma had giggled endlessly for the chance to play with “gampa’s” face fur as a game between them and as a tuck-in routine.

“Ever’tin’ all right at work today?” her father asked.

“Well we did see old Mistah Hampton,” her eyebrows arched in humor.

“Oh? And how did you see him today?” Lucius asked.

“Well, like you put it, Friday night he was slanticular, hangin’ between Mistah Thompson and a Mistah Colby. Yesterday he didn’t make it past horizontal. But today he was actually vertical. Polite, too.”

“Well, you go yo’ horizontal-vertical-slanticular way inside an’ help Mama get ready for suppah,” Rufus said.

“Yes, Daddy,” she piped. “We’ll call you when we’re good an’ ready.” She pushed in the door on the second try. As she tried to close it, the door bottom bound tightly the last six inches.

“I’ll get it,” Rufus said. He rose and gave the door a long pull with all his weight but the humidity-swollen door would not squeak across the doorsill.

As he sat back down, Lucius said, “I can help you plane it down again if you think it’ll help.”

“Oh I don’t know, Pop. If everything goes like it should, it won’t matter..”

Lucius hummed, staring off. “You’re ratt about that. With any luck at all, in a few more weeks...”

The front door opened suddenly and four smallish feet landed with a thump on the porch. “All right, its time fo’ suppah,” came two excited voices. Hannah Marie and her nine-year-old brother Sherman seemed to bubble with delight at having surprised the men. Rufus’s head snapped around, followed by a grin, but Lucius gave his rocker an extra push and almost knocked himself over backwards. At the last minute, he caught himself, reaching a hand back against the house wall. Rufus saw his fright was not just from the near spill, but the children missed it.

“C’mon, c’mon, let’s have suppah,” they implored, pulling the men to their feet. Hannah proclaimed like a prophet bringing the Word. “Mama said, ‘Now go get that Rufus Saxton Robinson and his old man Lucius right away. Iffin’ you get ‘em here before I count ten you’ll each get a piece of penny candy for the walk to church.’ So hurry up, hurry up! Mama’s countin!’”

They led the grinning, mock-protesting men inside. As Rufus carried in his chair he said, “How come we don’t get a piece o’ penny candy for walkin’ to church?” With a hard push, the door squeaked shut.

Later that night Alma couldn't fall asleep. Through the thin wall by her bed came the sound of Lucius's sleep noises. She frowned in the dark. His snoring, whimpering and mumbled words were a dead ringer for Mr. Hampton's on Saturday.

Saturday, June 1, 1912

Rutland

Spring had overcome the stubborn Vermont winter. Even east of Rutland, Pico Peak no longer wore a grey-brown coat, but now flaunted a green cape.

Calvin Salisbury came north along Main Street's east sidewalk. The worn tip of his cane landed a regular eight inches wide of his right shoe, but his step was still springy for being in his mid-seventies.

Ahead of Calvin across the street, a heavysset man lumbered south past a row of shops to the streetcar stop where Terrill became West Street. His hair was plastered down with Brilliantine, and a full gray beard rode under a squat pug nose. Calvin was suddenly fascinated by a handbill nailed to a wooden utility pole. He read the notice several times, keeping the pole between his face and the chunky fellow until a streetcar came clanging up West Street. As the car squealed to a halt, Calvin crossed the street behind the car. He heard a familiar wheezy voice from the open door saying, "You'd think after sixteen years they'd just give up their seats without a reminder."

The conductor's loud voice said to someone in the car, "You'll either have to stand or get off the car." A moment later, two lanky black men dressed as bellmen and wearing scornful expressions stepped onto the curb, griping loudly. As the car pulled away, they shook their fists after it.

Calvin walked past them and turned down a small row of shops and let himself in the fourth one. The bell over the door jingled while aromas of soap, camphor, and bay rum met his nose.

From behind the high leather and chrome chair, Randolph stopped snipping his scissors. "G'mannin, Calvin." The checker players by the window paused too. "Hello, Calvin." "Mannin', Judge." The stranger in the chair nodded and said, "How

air ya, sarr?" His lilt rolled from the Irish countryside to the barbershop window, still a bit surprising for Rutland.

Calvin nodded toward them all. "G'mannin, gentlemen." He carefully hung his coat, hat, and cane on the usual third hook, crossed to the barber's chair and held out his hand to the stranger. "How do you do? I'm Judge Calvin Salisbury, retired, from here in Rutland." His tangy New England vowels ricocheted off his crisp consonants.

Flipping the barber's sheet off his right hand, the newcomer shook Calvin's hand. "Playsure t' meet you, Judge Salisbury. M'name's Tom Boyle from South Boston. I'm the new manager at the Paramount over near Merchant's

Row," which sounded like "roo" to the others. "My staff recommended Mister Randolph's shop here."

"I'm sure," which struck Boyle's ear as "shah," "Randolph will give you his finest cutting," Calvin said, chuckling, as he took a chair by the wall. "He'll want you as a customer to replace us old fogies that have been here since before the War."

Randolph grinned and went back to his snipping. Soon he swung Boyle around to face the large wall mirror.

"Very handsome, I'm sure," Boyle said, quite pleased. Randolph scattered the clippings with a small brush, unbuttoned the sheet collar, and brushed the nape of Boyle's neck. "Tonic for you? Only five cents," he asked, wide, dark brown eyes blinking over a heavy, black moustache, the only hair above his neck.

"Ooo, not this time," replied Boyle, his jowls fluttering. Randolph nodded and worked the chair lever. Boyle lumbered down, reached in his vest pocket, and handed Randolph two dimes.

"There's fifteen for the cut, and five for your trouble," he said.

"Thank you," Randolph answered with a smile, his teeth bright in contrast to his walnut-colored skin. "Hope to see you next Saturday."

"I just might," said Boyle, slipping on his coat. "A good day t'all, gentlemen."

The bell jingled over Boyle, and Calvin took his place. Over at the checkerboard old Sam Wentworth doubled-jumped Tom Cockburn, leaving the middle-aged clerk of courts miffed. Sam had grown his hair mountain-man long in his cow-punching and prospecting days out West after the War. Now in his mid-seventies, he wore his salt-and-pepper hair in collar-length locks and faintly resembled a bearded Ben Franklin. He nodded after Boyle and imitated, "Thar's fifteen for the coot an' five for your trooble. Ha! A full chisel Boston Irishman here in Rutland."

"If he brings good shows to the Paramount, its fine by me he's Irish, or from Boston, or even Catholic," Calvin answered over the *shika-shika* of Randolph's scissors. Something about the barber's mood led Calvin to ask, "Everything going well, Randolph?"

"Guess it shows, huh? Well, it's just that Josiah Trimble who was here before Mr. Boyle. Got a haircut and beard trim but didn't want to pay me the five cents for the Brilliantine. Said since I had a lot of colored customers I didn't need to order it as often and so he should get it free."

"Cheapskate," the men agreed.

"Piker."

"Scrooge."

"He likes to show off his money without parting with it," Randolph growled. "Has he always been like that?"

Calvin shrugged but Sam piped up, "Ayup. Has been since the War, but before then the Trimbles were pretty hard up. I wonder if he got an inheritance or something."

Randolph's scissors went back to normal until Calvin sensed him finishing. "Randolph, this mannin' I'd also like a shave of my cheeks and a trim of my beard. And I'd like a tonic, the Bay Rum please."

"Yes, sir!" said Randolph eagerly. After squaring off Calvin's goatee he reclined the chair fully. Over the *chocka-chocka* sound of the shaving brush stirring in the mug Randolph asked, "What's the special occasion, Calvin?" He lathered up Calvin's cheeks, stopping where the edge of his moustache connected to his goatee. "Beard, shave and tonic is quite the haircut for you." He stropped his razor as Calvin answered, "It's Decoration Day, or Memorial Day as some of the younger folks call it. Tonight is the regimental dinner." He continued through barely moving lips as Randolph began shaving. "I'm giving the address this year."

"Congratulations, Calvin," Randolph said as he shaved.

"Quite an honor for you," Tom said to Calvin. "King me," he said to Sam.

Randolph finished the shave and applied a steaming towel. When Calvin came up from under the terry cloth, Sam asked, "All set for the speech?"

"I've got it written, if that's what you mean," Calvin said. "But I'll admit I'm nervous," which he pronounced "navvis."

"Why's that, Calvin?" Randolph asked.

"I gave orders in battle and made rulings in court," Calvin sighed, "but speaking to comrades about sacrifices... what the War meant... is a hard thing for

me. Some of them were wounded, some didn't come back." He swallowed hard. "Why were some blessed to survive when others gave so much?"

A somber mood crept into the barbershop. For Randolph and Cockburn, the war had been schoolboy stories and tight-faced looks from neighborhood women. For Sam, something tightened his guts and dried his mouth. Out loud he said, "I'm sure you'll do just fine, Calvin."

"And I'll make sure you look fine," said Randolph abruptly. He poured a splash from the white, conical bottle of Bay Rum and began rubbing it into Calvin's scalp. Smiling, he added, "I'll make sure you even *smell* fine," combing Calvin's plastered hair into place. Talk turned to idle topics.

A few minutes later, Calvin stepped down carefully and pulled out his snap purse. "How much I owe you, Randolph?"

"Well let's see. Haircut and shave, twenty-five cents, and another five for trimming your beard."

Calvin sniffed. "You forgot the Bay Rum, so that makes thirty-five."

Randolph looked at him steadily. "Thirty. No charge for the Bay Rum for the dinner speaker."

Calvin gave him a small smile, then handed over a quarter, a dime, and five pennies. "Then this is an extra tip, Randolph. Thank you."

Calvin headed west on West Street, crossing Lincoln and Church on the long slope down until he came to Merchant's Row. The shops were open and the sidewalks crowded. Calvin thought of the old days when a Rutland Line and a Hudson train almost arrived together and all the passengers would spill out onto Center and Evelyn streets. But this was Rutland's own population, shopping, jostling, laughing, hurrying, and generally ignoring the crisply bearded gentleman walking carefully with a chestnut cane and Bay Rum air.

Calvin passed Trimble's jewelry store, but there was no sign of the crusty, heavyset owner. He thought again of what Sam had said about Trimble's change of fortune at the end of the War. Sam had wondered about an inheritance, but now as Calvin pondered, he couldn't ever recall any of Josiah's or Abigail's relations having any particular wealth.

Calvin turned off a few doors later at Abernathy's. They had done a fine job – no dangling threads, a fraying cuff touched up with dye, brass buttons and insignia polished to a gleam. He paid twenty-five cents for the touchups and the new dry-cleaning process. The brown paper sheets crinkled softly as he carried the suit over his left arm. He decided to walk up Center Street for the exercise rather than take

the streetcar. Just shy of Court Street, he eyed the courthouse, his second home for over thirty years. Centered on the double front doors, across the street to the south, was a statue in a small park.

A pair of light green eyes stared south, not noticing Pico Peak off to the left, unblinking despite the gusty breeze. The sun was high enough so the cap bill shaded the eyes. Ever southward stared the eyes, nearly twenty feet off the ground, framed by squared-off sideburns and wisps of greenish hair. Weather-stained, lifeless, yet kindly, for nearly five decades those eyes had stared south. Pedestrians, carriages, motor cars, the eyes missed them all and did not see the cane-steadied walk of the eastbound man on the sidewalk carrying a freshly cleaned suit over his arm.

The cane-wielding old man knew those eyes and their stare, and the cheekbones, brows, forehead, mouth, and chin that attended them. But Calvin rarely looked, either into those green copper eyes, or south for the menace. Today he did not see that the bird serenading the morning was perched on the cap bill that shaded the eyes of the statue as he walked home to East Washington Street.

Later in the morning, Eleanor asked, "Calvin? Would it help if you tried out your speech on me?" Her marvelous blue eyes looked at him from her V-shaped face under a coiled crown of snow-white hair. Calvin valued her mind and her love but also this chance. The weight of wifely conventions had sunk heavily upon her, but being his sounding board for important speeches and rulings was a lasting reminder of her daring spirit and keen thoughts. Unconsciously, he hoped the effect of talking over his speech might last at least the rest of the day.

"Well, all right, I suppose," he stammered, not himself. He stood at the dining room table while she listened. Her face was a mask as he finished and asked, "What do you think?"

As she thought for a long moment he admired the passionate concentration nearly glowing from her, a passion he'd fallen in love with and married. "It's good Calvin. You cite history, quote Lincoln, and ask them to consider the causes of the War. But I think it's a little too Judge Salisbury and not enough Calvin."

"How do you mean?" he asked, sitting down next to her.

"It's almost a court ruling. You avoid hardships and you're hiding your smiles and humor."

"Ah, but the men..."

She finished, "...wouldn't mind some mention of their pains or something light-hearted from their soldier days. Show a bit of yourself and your own burdens and it will help the men with theirs."

"You think so?"

"Calvin, I've seen it in you when you've come back from reunions. You've talked up a storm with the other veterans and somehow that's helped you. The effect lasts for several weeks, so I'm glad you get to go so often."

"Really!" he exclaimed, still amazed how well she knew him.

"Maybe you could note their pains in the War and their pains now. This is 1912, and I think the men need to pay attention to that." Calvin nodded while scanning his manuscript. He began scribbling in the margins. Eleanor reached into her sewing basket and pulled out a pair of scissors. "These could help you move around some of the pieces."

He grinned as she snapped the pair in the air. "Ayup, I'll get it."

"I know you will," she smiled back in the way that always made him blush slightly.

Calvin finished reworking the manuscript and tried out some lines and paragraphs on Eleanor. She nodded vigorously. "That's it. That's a speech!"

"Thanks," he said, feeling drained. Indeed, lunchtime was at hand but he felt weaker than just from hunger. "I think I'll lie down for a bit." She saw him pale and shaky.

"Don't try the stairs. Go right into the back room and draw the shade. Lie down on the guest bed and I'll bring you a compress. Maybe we can head off an attack."

Calvin wobbled around the back room, loosed the drapes' tie-backs and lay down, small lights flashing in his closed eyes and a pang behind his right eyebrow. Ellie hurried in with a dishcloth and an enameled tin bowl of ice she had chipped off the block in the icebox.

"Take your shoes off," Ellie said softly but with a certain crispness as well. "Loosen your collar and your shirt cuffs." With an effort Calvin managed, then whispered, "Sorry to be a burden, Ellie."

Ellie chuckled back. "Well this is no burden. Heat, biting bugs, storms, and poor colored folk coming into camp at Port Royal by the dozens every day; that was a burden. Unruly soldiers making fun of us trying to teach reading and writing; that was a burden."

Calvin winced as his shoe slipped from his hand and thumped the floor. The sound bumped through his head like a book falling off a high shelf. Ellie saw his pain and bit her lip as he lay back on the pillow. She wrapped the ice chips in the wet dishtowel and spread the compress across his forehead. She stroked his cheek as relief washed his face, and she whispered again, “No burden. Port Royal and missing you was a burden. Not this. Not you.”

Calvin fell into a deep sleep. Eleanor pulled an afghan over him and tiptoed out.

She wrote him a note in case he woke while she was gone. She made herself a sandwich and cut up an apple and tucked them into a basket. She cut a few spring flowers from the side garden and tied them with a ribbon. Then she went to the Rutland Town Cemetery for the Decoration Day ceremonies. She laid flowers from Calvin and herself on the grave there. She hoped the rifle squad volleys and especially the three blank cannon rounds would not carry to East Washington Street. If he could sleep, he might make it to the banquet.

After the men had recited the Gettysburg Address, Calvin rose, aligned the creases in his pants, and walked deliberately to the podium. He was not quite himself but was much improved. He leaned lightly on his cane with the brass ring at its neck. The spiraling inscription in the freshly polished brass read,

*To Maj. Calvin Salisbury, 14th VT, Army of the Potomac,
for heroism, duty, and service to God and country.*

From his men, May 30, 1876.

A compactly built, small-boned man of angular features, his cheekbones stood out in sharp relief above his surprisingly smooth cheeks. Thanks to Randolph, his neatly trimmed moustache rode white and crisp above a wedge of beard. He pulled on his steel-rimmed glasses and scanned the room, seeing old friends, but missing Ashton Melo. Ashton was from the gallant 54th Massachusetts, a regular attendee, but tonight the oval African face was absent. Calvin was crestfallen since he hoped Ashton, in particular, would like his speech.

Calvin spread out his manuscript, written in small, clear script on several sheets of fine linen paper. When he spoke, his voice was classic New England nasal in a tenor pitch often called boyish. His light voice made him take extra pains choosing words and phrases for their authority. He nodded to John Franklin.

“It is from a solemn obligation to duty that I accepted our post commander’s request. We meet tonight for the forty-sixth time to honor our comrades, recall

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our sacrifices, and reaffirm the principles of liberty and democracy which we defended.

“Not every generation is called on to defend the nation. Not every generation suffers as we have suffered.” Calvin glanced at the empty sleeves and mask-like faces of several men at their tables. “My friends, we are such a generation. We were called, we answered, and we suffered and died so that those who live after us might have peace and opportunity.

“But was our sacrifice of limb, life, blood, and treasure worth the ideals of America? After all, those who fought against the Constitution also gave their treasure, their blood, and their lives. They fought nobly and courageously. If there was equal valor and equal suffering on both sides, can’t we stop there? There are many who do so. Many veterans and Civil War enthusiasts want to debate tactics, celebrate old soldiers being old together and leave aside the meanings of the War.” His blue-gray eyes slowly swept across the room like it was a jury box. “Of all Americans, we cannot do that.”

“What if the South had prevailed? Suppose Lee had broken our Army and taken Washington City? What if Bragg had beaten Buell in Kentucky? What if Halleck had stayed in the field scratching both elbows and standing in Grant’s way?” A snorted chuckle ran around the room. Men recalled the old photograph image of Henry Halleck, Grant’s superior in the War’s first year, performing an odd self-hug as he scratched.

“We would hear much less about valor and honor. Instead, another nation would taunt us about states’ rights, the superior white race and Negro inferiority, and justify slavery by Biblical appeal. Indeed we hear much of that now.

“But my friends, because of the North’s victory we have given the whole nation a new birth of freedom. Our struggles were the birthing pains of a deeper liberty for all Americans and a beacon for the nations of the earth. That is why we require our school children learn Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address and what our fight accomplished.

“You see, freedom has been born and defended many times. Freedom was born in the Magna Carta of 1215. Freedom was defended by the men of Sir Francis Drake against the Spanish Armada in 1588. Freedom was reborn on our shores at Plymouth Rock in 1621. Freedom was defended in Boston in 1689 when royal governor Andros and his state bishop were overthrown. Freedom was reborn in 1776 in the immortal words of Jefferson’s Declaration. And my friends,” Calvin

said in a measured pace, “four score and seven years later we defended freedom and brought freedom to millions.

“Our national shame was preaching and denying liberty at the same time. It fell to our generation, led by President Lincoln and his mighty generals Grant and Sherman, to pay this national shame. We bled, fought, starved, and died so our national sin might be atoned for in our flesh. For this, we have earned the praise and thanks of our countrymen.

“Yet has liberty taken root? In the South, colored people are barred from schools, jobs, parks, even from cemeteries. Every year dozens of lynchings...”

A heavy thud boomed against the double doors at the back of the hall and the doorknobs rattled. Through the cigar smoke haze, Calvin saw someone get up and pull open the door. He looked down and started violently. Then a strong but shaky voice said, “It’s Ashton Melo, bleedin’ bad.”

The banquet dissolved into a hubbub of chatter, scraping chairs, and clumping feet. One cook was dispatched to fetch a doctor, and another to bring a constable. Calvin pushed through the chaos and saw a blood smear congealed on the brass “54” on Ashton’s kepi. Melo’s whimpering made his heart sink and his stomach turn over. He even had a stab of pain behind his eye like from earlier in the day. He had forgotten, because he never wanted to remember again, how blood stained a dark blue Union uniform.

The ambulance horse beat an easy, fading clip-clop on Rutland’s street bricks. The crowd began fading away with the clang of the ambulance bell. A policeman had questioned many but learned little. The veterans stood in knots, mourning this sour, nasty finish to their Decoration Day banquet.

By the blood-smear door jamb, Calvin stood talking with Detective Higgins, Sam, and Commander Franklin. As he overheard post Junior Commander Josiah Trimble holding forth nearby with a small group, he set his jaw and narrowed his eyes. Trimble had big bones crammed into little height, his double chin unsuccessfully hidden by a “Grant”-style beard. A fat, gaudy ring on his left pinkie winked in the glow of the gaslights in the hall. He shook his jowls in apparent sadness. “Looks like he’d lost a button off his uniform. Don’t know if the blood’ll wash out. It’s a real shame that an old man like Ashton should get hurt like this.”

The others muttered sympathetically while inspecting their own threadbare and often straining jackets with fifty-year-old trousers. One vet, whose pants’ outseams showed the red ribbon of the artillery, said, “Have we become so

insignificant?" A tiny, leathery veteran sporting the crossed-sabers pin of the cavalry answered, "This is just mean. I've been to reunions and shaken hands with old Rebels. Not one of them would do anything like this even though they were on the other side. What would possess someone to attack a vet'ran in uniform?"

Josiah stroked his beard backhandedly. "Maybe someone objected not to the color of the uniform so much as the color *in* the uniform." A strained group chuckle encouraged him. "President Lincoln could not have foreseen putting freed slaves in uniform also put ideas in their heads: voting, or living where they want rather than where they belong, or working in respectable lines." Two men nodded, but two others scowled slightly as Josiah continued. "Just because Ashton joined the army and played house boy on a colonel's staff doesn't make him a soldier. We didn't need his kind to beat the rebels then and we don't need his kind to not know their place now."

Josiah suddenly said "oomph" and stumbled forward as Calvin lurched from the milling crowd into the group. "I'm so sorry, Josiah. Are you all right?" Calvin's hand caught Josiah's shoulder from behind. The hand arrived quickly from its visit to the ribs over Josiah's kidneys.

"Ah, ooh, yes, I'm fine Calvin," Josiah said, apparently wondering at him.

Calvin sighed theatrically. "Such a shame anyone in Vermont would attack one of us. Constable said whoever did it used a knife. The cut didn't go too high on Ashton's arm because of his volunteer veteran's chevron. Good thing he reenlisted in 1864. That chevron might have saved his life tonight." Calvin tapped the heavy, V-shaped appliqué on his own sleeve, issued to "volunteer veterans" who reenlisted, and who were rewarded with substantial federal and state government bounties and bonuses for doing so. In this group, Calvin and two others had a chevron while Josiah's sleeve was blank below his corporal's stripes. He glared at Calvin and said, "Re-enlisting for garrison duty wasn't very heroic."

Calvin held his matching glare to Josiah's a bit longer than usual before he broke it off. "Re-enlisting like Melo did for Cold Harbor and the Crater earned him that chevron." A round of nods, a couple of them reluctant, quietly applauded Calvin.

Determined to lighten the mood, Calvin said, "Gentlemen, supper's over and so is my speech, but could you help me settle everyone? We have news about the Fourth of July parade and about next year's Encampment at Gettysburg."

As Calvin moved back to the head table, Post Commander Franklin began gaveling for order. Even the hard of hearing quieted quickly.

“Gentlemen, please be seated,” Franklin directed. “As we find out more about Ashton’s injuries, the Post secretary” – he nodded at Calvin – “will write you. I want to inform the post of two items.

“First, members of the post and visiting veterans are asked to assemble at the train station by nine o’clock on the Fourth of July to march in the parade.”

Ordinary nods greeted this routine reminder.

“Second, we have received a letter from Alfred Beers, Commander-in-Chief of the GAR, I mean, the Grand Army of the Republic. Calvin?”

Calvin rose and read, “All veterans, regardless of army of service, are invited to a national Encampment at Gettysbaag in July, 1913. The state of Pennsylvania is paying rail fare of every vet’ran living in that state. Members of the GAR are invited to ask the same from their home states.’ It’s signed by both Commander-in-Chief Beers and Irvine Walker, General-Commanding of the United Confederate Veterans, the UCV. So this will be a true national, North and South, Encampment.”

A rumble of conversation rose amid approving nods.

Commander Franklin gaveled for order. “Men, the U.S. Army has already been at work for a year preparing for this Encampment. They will work the coming year to make ready for maybe 40,000 men from both sides. Imagine it, men! Two years’ work for an eight day event – and for us, the men of the blue and gray. That will be an Encampment worth attending.” He sighed, his eyes far away in imagination for a moment. Then he sobered. “Now let us stand and bow our heads as Chaplain Rupert leads us in prayer.”