

## CAROUSEL I

*“Human nature does not change ... What happened yesterday,  
will happen today, will happen tomorrow.”*

in “Shadows,” *Long and Short Stories*, by Henry Tedeschi

James Leviton first met Miss Clarissa at a dinner at Lord and Lady Chapell's in 1775. She eventually played an important role in his life.

A dashing young gentleman, Sir Guy Compton, perhaps at Lord Chapell's urging, had made a point of accompanying him and introducing him to other guests. He had also listened attentively to his tales, and James felt flattered since Sir Guy appeared intelligent and well informed. James considered himself lucky since Sir Guy also served as his guide on other occasions. The ways of England and London in particular were so different from his American background! He found the various accents rather difficult to deal with. Although his contact with servants and lower-class individuals had been very limited, in his mind their speech and cant sounded like a totally alien language.

Despite his mercantile activities, Lord Chapell was highly regarded and had not been barred from high society, the so-called 'ton', well represented at that dinner. After all, even in England of the second half of the eighteenth century the need to be wellborn was essential, but money was also important and the man was very rich.

The large group included many who were elegantly dressed, although James considered the fashion bizarre and exaggerated. Many of the men wore wigs or

powdered their hair, and many of the women's low-cut gowns exposed more than he was accustomed to seeing. The women were frequently painted to lighten their complexions, and their cheeks and lips were rouged. Sometimes, the more foppish men followed suit, and one of the gentlemen wore high-heeled shoes as if it were the height of fashion. James wondered why any of them would bother since those devices brought such an unfavorable result. James was met at the door by Lord and Lady Chapell. He was formally introduced to Lady Chapell and bowed in the same way he had seen others do. She was a tall and thin woman who appeared as arrogant as her husband. Her complexion was sallow and her eyes hard. Her dress was of a severe gray.

“Ah!” she murmured. “Mr. Leviton from New York. A pleasure.” Her lips were twisted in a moue that seemed to express the opposite.

In the conversation preceding the sumptuous meal, some of the men and women he had been introduced to were fascinated and shocked by his accounts of Indians, massacres and the religious sophistries that seemed to prevail in the New World. A man actually protested that James should be less graphic with innocent women present. James was unaccustomed to subtlety or politeness or the presence of innocent women. The ones he had known at home, such as his own sister Eloise, were blunt sometimes even to the point of being rude and didn't skirt issues or topics.

The presence of a colonial such as James Leviton at social occasions was not common. He had been invited by Lord Chapell. because he was one of a team representing a large company that had carried out negotiations with Lord Chapell for textile exports to the American colonies. His presence at social events might have had something to do with the fact that Chapell seemed to be under the mistaken

impression that James Leviton was a scion of the fabulously rich New York Levitons whose Tory sympathies were well known. In fact, he was only a distant relative. James was a family name, there was a James Leviton III, a far removed middle-aged cousin who actually possessed a fortune. James didn't disabuse Chapell since the matter was never directly discussed and he enjoyed the ambiguity of his position.

Americans, rarely available, were generally socially shunned. They were considered vulgar, in part for their plain, blunt talk and outdated and coarse clothing, in part because they didn't seem to know their place. James felt that all their prejudices were confirmed by his own presence. He didn't lack insight into the state of affairs or his own makeup.

Although nobody mentioned the recent incident most of the guests had been fascinated by the gossip generated by James's two duels that had taken place in a single week. Imagine, the fool had gotten into an argument with a group of fancies who had been harassing a young Hebrew girl. He should have turned away and ignored the whole unpleasant matter like any real gentleman would. There was nothing significant about the little hussy. But, no -- after vigorously voicing his objections to no avail, he had wielded his cane and meted out terrible blows before the four men could unsheathe their dress swords. James had conveyed the terrified girl to her home. The group reassembled later at their club and at first considered horsewhipping their adversary. Since he was a guest of Lord Chapell, however, the matter was reconsidered. Surely, a colonial wouldn't know the finer points of defending one's honor, but nevertheless he was visited by seconds and an uncomfortable Sir Guy and one of his friends represented James. James had chosen swords as the weapons for the first encounter

and one unfortunate gentleman, Sir Martcross, was badly punctured in his right arm after. James had allowed his second opponent to choose pistols with the result that poor Sir Bertolow almost had to have his arm amputated. It was lucky that the skill of the attending surgeon had been able to avoid that terrible outcome. The unfortunate young men had no way of knowing that James had been intensely trained by his father since infancy in preparation for the possible consequences of exploring Indian lands and his father's recollections of the French and Indian wars.

James had been introduced briefly to Miss Clarissa. He bowed, although that display made him uncomfortable. From her last name, James assumed she was related to Lord Chapell. He was told later that she was his wayward daughter. He couldn't imagine what was meant by that. She was shapely with black hair. Her gown, although becoming and a bright purple, was very plain and she wore no makeup. Older than most of the unmarried women in the crowd, he found her regular features and her lively, mischievous eyes very attractive. She might have been in her middle twenties -- an age that in England and even in the American colonies was considered to be approaching spinsterhood.

As luck or circumstances had it, he later found himself sitting at the table next to Miss Clarissa. The seating arrangement alternated men and women, didn't segregate the genders to different sides of the table as was frequently done.

Her eyes seemed amused as she commented, "Ah, the notorious Mr. Leviton. Nice to see you again. Probably ready to tell more frightful stories." And then she laughed. Most people didn't make such a remark even in jest.

“I don’t know whether I’m notorious, but it has been noted that I find it difficult to stay out of trouble.”

“Was it worth the trouble?” She smiled to show that she wasn’t criticizing his stance.

James understood that she must have been referring to the events leading to the duels. “Violence is rarely to be condoned, but I couldn’t avoid it. If you mean the fate of who I heard referred to as ‘that little hussy’, I would say that I’m glad I intervened. She was a shy, terrified little girl who didn’t deserve the treatment.”

The man across from him, whose name he had forgotten, took the initiative to change the uncomfortable subject and plunge into another even more contentious. “It’s my understanding that the American colonies are in an uproar over issues of little import. What’s your view?”

James was not in agreement with the man’s sentiment about the importance of the issues and he hesitated for a moment. It was Miss Chapell who intervened. She might have sensed that James didn’t feel like contradicting their neighbor. Women were not supposed to know or comment on political or world events. Aside from their reproductive role, their main task was to provide the entertainment of men and pleasant, charming conversations of no great significance, featuring frequently the weather and some unimportant gossip. Her social rank made her intervention even more unusual. James was surprised to hear her contribution as it unfolded.

“It’s hard to predict where the current crisis will lead us, but our American colonies will sooner or later part from us. Aside from what we have in common,

enormous differences separate us. They receive immigrants from many parts of the world. By and large their religions are different from ours. The absence of primogeniture will lead to the breakdown of estates and hence the decrease of the significance of the wellborn. Furthermore, they have enjoyed some degree of independence with their provincial assemblies. Dissolving them may well exacerbate the problems and lead to completely independent governments with no ties to Great Britain. Certainly, punitive measures such as the abrogation of the charter of Massachusetts and closing of the port of Boston have inflamed most, if not all, of the colonies.”

The man’s stern stare was disapproving and he turned studiously to his neighbor his other side. But Miss Clarissa ignored the snub. Obviously, for her it was not a new experience.

She was ready for even more controversial topics. “Tell me, Mr. Leviton, are women mistreated in the American colonies as they are here? Are they chattel and under the thumb of their husbands or fathers?”

“Probably. The world has been very unkind to women. In America, their status differs significantly from colony to colony and depends, as it does here, on social class. I’d imagine they are more appreciated and more independent in New England than in other locales. However, they are usually banned everywhere from most and perhaps all professions.”

Miss Clarissa looked at him thoughtfully. “You know this is the first time any man has spoken with me about this touchy subject as an equal. Perhaps it has happened before, but I can’t remember it.”

James thought she was unusually attractive once she lost her angry expression brought forth by her indignation. She had most a lovely smile which lit up her whole face.

The dinner was very pleasant and the food, served in excess by bustling maids, quite good. Conversations continued until the end of the meal. Then both the men and the women rinsed their mouths with water that had been brought in bowls by the maids, a practice a surprised James was thought affected. They then wiped their lips on the edge of the tablecloth. After that, the men and women followed the separate leads of Lord and Lady Chapell to adjacent rooms--the men for brandy and cigars, the women for gossip and wine. James found the aroma of food supplanted by that of a mixture of beeswax and wood smoke and then by the fragrance of cheroots.

His next introduction to London involved visiting the opera with Guy. He wondered whether his guide and companion attended him because he enjoyed the company of a rube, had been assigned as his guide, or just considered himself a friend. The opera had yet to begin. They had gone early at James's insistence. James carefully examined the theater ablaze with lights. He was surprised that with all the apparent conflagration the stage didn't catch fire.

He couldn't help enquiring, "Why are most of the balconies empty?"

"Most of the ton comes late. The idea is to be seen, not to see the opera itself."

"Who are those scantily dressed, elegant young women? "

"Don't you have those in the colonies? Those are fancy prostitutes, trying to attract attention."

"My goodness! I never thought everything could be that open."

Looking around he spied the various boxes. His eyes stopped at two struggling women and a half dressed young girl. "Isn't that Miss Clarissa? And what's going on?"

Clarissa was dressed simply but exhibited a sparkling necklace and several jewels, some pinned to her gown. She had her right arm around a very young girl and was fending off the older woman with her left arm.

"God, it certainly looks like her. She must be tangling with a Covent Garden abbess while trying to rescue that child. It's best to ignore those things but our Clarissa is unable do that."

"What are you talking about?"

"An abbess is a madam in your part of the world. She's trying to show off one of her country girls. Probably just arrived in London from the country, if she hasn't been sold by her father."

The trio had suddenly disappeared from the box.

"What's happening?"

"They probably moved to the alley where she'll get offers. That's usually how it's done."

"Let's go," James couldn't hide his impatience.

"It could get very nasty."

They arrived just as Miss Clarissa was departing with the young girl. The madam, a blowsy, rouged and outrageously dressed woman, had a satisfied look and was counting money. But that wasn't the end. There were several unpleasant looking villains who blocked Clarissa's way. One of them was very loud with his threats and

looked very muscular. Whether they wanted to steal from her or attack her didn't matter to James. It seemed to be a repeat of his previous rescue, except this time he was not alone and he was dealing with ruffians and not so-called gentlemen. The two of them probably would have to face knives rather than swords. "You'd better let her go," he yelled in an angry voice.

The men turned in their direction threateningly. They seemed much amused. James lacked a weapon aside from his cane and Guy was too elegantly dressed to be a threat.

"No popinjay can tell us what to do!"

James's cane swished through the air. The man closest to him fell, hit by James's unlikely weapon. Sir Guy unsheathed his dress sword and at that point, their opponents quickly disappeared, one of them offering support to his dazed companion.

Miss Clarissa swayed. James supported her with one hand. He began thinking of her as Clarissa from that moment on. She recovered quickly.

"Please, would you be so kind as to notify my friends in the third box that I'm not staying?"

Sir Guy was quick to respond. "At your service, Miss Clarissa."

James stayed with the two women. The young girl was still scared and couldn't suppress reluctant sobs. Clarissa kept murmuring reassuring words. Following Guy's errand, James and Guy accompanied them to Guy's carriage which quickly delivered them to Clarissa's address.

A butler opened the door. "Miss Clarissa," he said as he held the door open.

“I’m most grateful for your help, gentlemen. Please come in.” After they entered she said, “Please excuse me for a minute while Mr. Bowman gets my maid to take care of Dawn. Oh, gentlemen, this is Dawn.” James surmised that Mr. Bowman must be the butler.

Dawn looked very young and still terrified. Clarissa held her arm and said gently, “Everything will be alright. My maid, Mary, and I will take good care of you.”

Mary came in and curtsied. She was a petite woman with dark black hair and a sweet smile.

“Can you please take care of Dawn. I rescued her from bad trouble.”

When Mary and Dawn left, she sighed and addressed the two men again. She didn’t seem too distressed by her experience. Clearly she was a determined and courageous woman.

“Sorry to have taken you away from the opera and thank you again for your bravery. Can I offer you tea, wine or brandy?”

After they accepted the drinks brought in by Bowman, she continued, “How did you discover my plight?”

“We saw you struggling with that witch!”

“Witch is a kind term for that woman. It’s lucky that I had some money in my reticule.”

The incident came to an end on a pleasant note. James was much impressed by Clarissa’s brave behavior.

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The late spring day had been sunny and pleasant. A large group of young men and women had ventured forth on a picnic in the countryside. James's attendance had been encouraged by Sir Guy who was the bearer of an informal invitation. Calling the event a *fête champêtre*, as they all did, seemed most pretentious. There were so many, mostly a crowd of young men and women, that they had been taken in four carriages, followed by others which conveyed the needed servants and victuals as well as drinks.

James found the outing strange. Communing with nature by sitting on enchanting blankets, with servants providing every need and every whim seemed contradictory. He soon tired of the tittering and sophistries emanating from the guests. Besides, nobody seemed very interested in exchanges with a colonial especially after earlier contacts had made his uncouthness obvious. They must have become tired of stories about America which in their minds had nothing to do with their own world.

The countryside was delightful so James detached himself from the group. Guy was bewitched by a beautiful young woman, Belinda, and James was reluctant to ask him to accompany him. He was well accustomed to being on his own and enjoyed what he was seeing. He was delighted by a close encounter with warblers and their delightful songs. A flock of birds flew away at his approach. The display of flowers, yellow, white and blue was appealing.

The darkening of the sky found him unprepared for the change in weather. Suddenly and overwhelmingly -- rain, lightening and thunder. Quickly, he searched for shelter. He had seen a structure which seemed to be an abandoned barn. On his way

he found Clarissa standing under a tree, her wet dress sticking to her and emphasizing her figure.

“No! That’s too dangerous. Come with me!”

He took her by the hand and they rushed to the building he had seen before. There was nothing left but to wait in the gloom, the humidity, the smell of hay and mold until the outburst subsided. The rain drummed on the roof which was leaking at several spots. Lightening and thunder occasionally broke the monotony. They were there alone for a long time. James was surprised at how comfortable he felt with her even under such unfavorable circumstances.

He felt obliged to ask, “How come you strayed so far?”

“I was looking for you, hoping to have a reasonable conversation instead of the usual meaningless prattle about the beauties of nature or the gossip about the last ball.”

Left unsaid was why she had decided to participate in the event at all.

“I’m flattered! I was just admiring the tame English countryside. I’m sorry I didn’t see you earlier. You wouldn’t have had to drift so far and be caught by the elements.”

In the dark interior they could barely see each other’s faces and there was no way of sitting down, but somehow their conversation didn’t languish. James didn’t understand how their exchanges could quickly roam from women’s rights, to whether America had responded to the deep and iconoclastic thoughts generated by French philosophers such as Voltaire, Rousseau and Montesquieu. He could assure her that they had become part of the many issues debated in the New World. He couldn’t help wondering how her intellect could be so sharp and so well informed. She seemed to be

curious about his life in America, but there was little of interest that he could present. Her world was much more interesting even if in his eyes very strange. She had been able to establish a refuge for abandoned young women who to avoid starvation would have otherwise drifted into prostitution. It had been a stormy path that wasn't considered respectable. But she thought she was succeeding, although many obstacles still remained. Her refuge had now three young women whom she was trying to train so that they could eventually make an honest living. Undoubtedly, the unfortunate Dawn would join them.

Finally, the angry patter of the raindrops ceased, offering them an opportunity to return to the group.

The carriages were all gone and only Sir Guy had waited for them.

"A carriage will be coming soon. But I'm shocked to find that you were alone together all this time."

James was surprised by the antagonistic tone in his friend's voice.

"We were caught in the rain. We just talked."

"I'm afraid you have compromised Miss Clarissa.."

"Don't be ridiculous! We just talked."

'I'm afraid we take these things very seriously. I'm sure you'll have to answer to Lord Chapell."

"Don't be ridiculous."

But James began to feel uncomfortable when he saw that Clarissa had turned pale.

She whispered to him, "I had nothing to do with this. Please believe me."

He still felt that the situation was absurd. "I'll be happy to talk to Lord Chapell."

In the carriage, the tension between the two men was such that Sir Guy decided to sit in front with the driver.

Clarissa addressed James in whispers. "These things can be messy. They might try to force your hand to marry me. Since you're about to leave for America, I imagine you can escape readily, although you might not be able to avoid a duel. As I understand it, based on your previous experience you wouldn't be that concerned about that. One other possibility is that we become engaged and then you leave or else I turn you down after you agree to marry me!"

"I still think this is ridiculous. Surely Lord Chapell will understand. Besides, I'm terrible marriage material. I have little money and no social prominence, I'm the wrong James Leviton." Then after a pause, "We have been talking only about my problem. But where does all of this leave you?"

"Don't worry about me. I'm considered unmarriageable, almost a spinster, because of my age, ideas and unbecoming, farouche behavior."

A few days later, facing Lord Chapell, the glacial attitude of the older man made it clear that any rationale discussion was impossible. He seemed to expect that James had to marry Clarissa.

James had had contacts with Lord Chapell when negotiating for his group. Chapell would remain expressionless and invariably presented a cold exterior -- an arrogant and hard man to deal with. James had been selected by the Americans for the

negotiations because he seemed to be able to deal with Chapell's antagonism.

James's apparent prominence in the negotiations might have mistakenly enhanced the impression of his importance. In actual fact, the Americans had discussed their position as a group before opening negotiations and he was operating within very clearly delineated conditions. The situation concerning Clarissa was entirely different from his experience transacting business matters and James didn't understand how he could proceed.

"May I speak privately to your daughter?"

Chapell puffed indignantly but opened the door to a small library. "You can talk all you want but leave the door open."

James thought the situation had slid into absurdity but was happy to be alone with Clarissa. Remembering their previous conversation he asked, "Will you refuse me if I agree to marry you?"

"I wish to have your permission to accept. The situation has changed drastically. They closed my refuge and threw my poor women into the street. If you don't marry me I have to wed a captain who is headed to India. I can refuse of course, but then I might have only the street as an alternative or something equally degrading."

"Marriage to me might not be such an attractive option. The world is entirely different in America. It won't be easy for you to adjust to the changes. In addition, as I explained I'm quite financially limited."

"Financially, my dowry might help. For me the issue right now is what will happen if you don't marry me."

Curiously, James had never considered marriage seriously. It's not that he wasn't interested in women, but he certainly lacked experience. Aside from one or two crushes developed when he was in his teens and a brief interlude with a mature widow, he had never been seriously involved romantically.

Was this just a trap? If it was, he was almost certain that Clarissa had nothing to do with it. He didn't see what advantage she would derive. If Lord Chapell had snared him to get rid of an embarrassing daughter unable to marry as required by society, it didn't really matter. What would happen to Clarissa was what was important, and besides what did he have to lose? He hadn't courted a woman for a long time. His frequent travels had made him unable to interact socially with most people. Leaving for America with her after a wedding might work well. If not it would not be necessarily a calamity. If something went wrong, there were a number of possibilities, including an annulment.

Through all his silent reflections Clarissa remained serious, looking at him without any begging or histrionics. He was struck by her dignity and her calm beauty. He couldn't imagine the well hidden turmoil going through her mind. She knew her whole future was in the balance. James was the rare man she liked, but marriage was another matter. She had no idea where it would lead emotionally, but then the alternatives seemed worse.

"James, you decide. If it's too much for you, I'll have to refuse you."

"If you came with me to America your life would be very difficult. Not only it would be a totally different environment but we live very modestly. My father and I have a scrubbing woman once a week. No butlers, maids, livery men, cooks or footmen."

“Being thrown onto the street or into a marriage to a man I don’t even know would be better? Do you really think I am so useless as to need a retinue of servants?”

James was not convinced, but wasn’t ready to abandon her. They quickly agreed that they would marry but their relationship would remain platonic until the events that would determine their future became clearer.

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Later that year, it became apparent the American colonies were in open rebellion. King George III decided on a tough approach driven by his sense of duty to his empire. In contrast, many of the voices in Parliament, most notably those of Edmund Burke and John Wilke, supported the Americans and advised conciliation. However, the tougher attitude prevailed -- many felt that the American colonials loyal to the crown were much more numerous than the insurgents. After the bloody encounters in Lexington and Concord in June 1775, the conflict became irrevocable.

James, who had free access to Clarissa after their engagement, felt he had to discuss the events with her.

“Look, the conflict in America is very serious. Many think that the clash will be short-lived. I know that cannot be true. It will be bloody and protracted. If you wish to stay in London after we get married, it’s up to you. I have to leave. My work and my future are in America.”

Clarissa was firm. “No, I’m not going to stay in London alone.” She admired his resolve and felt that she could provide no less, although she knew clearly that she had no real alternative.

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Once in America, Clarissa realized that James had not lied when he had recited the difficulty she would encounter. New York seemed small with narrow meandering streets, mostly unpaved. Except for some remarkable mansions, the houses were attached to each other. Every seventh house was required to have a light on at night.

James's mother had died many years before. White-haired, mustached, tall and formal, her father-in-law, William Leviton, was closer to her expectations. Although he lived with the two of them, he seemed to spend his time in many activities and rarely interacted with the two of them. He had been delighted with James's marriage. He had thought his son would never take that step. He was most pleased to meet her and shook hands with her.

"I never thought it would happen! When it comes to women my poor son is gun shy!"

Clarissa felt herself blush.

"Dad, don't give all my secrets away. Besides, that was before I met Clarissa."

"I should hope so. She is charming and I'm sure very talented."

James's father studiously stayed out of their way. On certain days he played chess with his son. On other days he met with friends of the same age at a local tavern.

Keeping house was exhausting even if James had finally agreed to a washerwoman once a week and a maid besides the scrubbing woman they'd always had. James had been reluctant to use her dowry which he considered hers. Disposing of some financial instruments he had invested in before his trip to England introduced some flexibility into their finances. In a turmoil of emotions, Clarissa found herself

missing what she had despised -- knowing only too well its faults and that it couldn't be hers under any circumstances.

She had learned to cook a few simple dishes, and James, when in town, was always ready to take over that task, an alternative she found humiliating.

Clarissa found her social contact with James's relatives and friends puzzling when not mortifying. Hugging seemed to be required. Her experiences with her relatives in England were never so effusive. A few years older than James, his sister Eloise had even cried when they'd first met as she held Clarissa in a tight embrace. Eloise assured her that she and her brother had been very close -- they had had to look out for each other. Their mother had died when they were so young! Eloise didn't live with them. She was married with two little girls. Her married name was Stewart. Eventually Clarissa met the whole family.

All their American acquaintances spoke plainly, without embellishments. Balls, gowns, fashions were not part of their conversations. Their life was equally simple. Just what Clarissa thought she'd been striving for. Nevertheless facing her new world, she found it full of emptiness.

Intruding was the menacing news of the British troops at loggerheads with the Americans, boding a violence that she was not prepared for.

She knew she was regarded as a cold, unemotional woman. Being English made her social acceptance even more difficult. It wasn't easy for her to deal with new acquaintances. As a child, it had been driven into her that a show of emotion was uncomely, although she couldn't disagree more with that sentiment. If they thought her unfeeling, they should see her weeping in bed when she tried to go to sleep at night.

James was with her sometimes. He traveled extensively for his business. When together at home, their situation imposed a distance -- a forced silence in emotions, perhaps to be expected for a man and a woman living in intimate nearness, yet held together only by bonds of friendship and mutual respect, not knowing much about each other. However, at times she was very aware that he was an attractive man. Similarly, he had been aware of her comeliness even at their first meeting and it wasn't something he was likely to forget.

Although necessary, she found the platonic aspects of her relationship humiliating. Ironically, she thought she would be terrified if James tried to make love to her. She was really very inexperienced and had had very little to do with men.

Clarissa didn't know what precipitated the crisis. Her father-in-law was away visiting relatives. She had been cooking. Eloise was visiting and Clarissa took great care with a new recipe. James was coming home later and the two women were restless.

For a while they voiced pleasantries, but then the conversation took another turn. Eloise was troubled. "For the life of me, I can't understand your marriage. I have never seen either of you show much affection for the other."

Clarissa wished Eloise would stop talking about something so personal. "Well, nevertheless we're husband and wife."

"Is that why you don't share a bed? I couldn't help noticing this morning that James sleeps on the couch."

"I don't think any of this is any of your business."

“What did you do, trick him into marriage?”

Clarissa almost slapped her. The iron in her eyes made Eloise step back. But then Clarissa turned away, removed the pot from the fire and went to her room. She felt humiliated and pained. With tears in her eyes, she packed a few garments and undergarments in a small carpetbag and left the house without looking back.

“Where are you going? What’s happening? I didn’t really mean it. Please come back!”

Not much time had elapsed before James found her. She hadn’t expected to be discovered so quickly. In her room in the inn, they found themselves face to face with tears crowding in their eyes.

“You’ve left for good?”

She nodded in affirmation. He had never seen her so sad and so tormented.

“It’s just not working out, James.”

“You didn’t take anything. The life of a woman alone is hard enough. You should have some money. Your dowry and more. You worked hard. It must have been very difficult.”

They looked at each other silently. She couldn’t refrain from wondering and she asked, “You really want me to stay, don’t you? Why?”

“I love you!”

Suddenly, they were in each other arms. In their embrace their marriage became sealed with love. They found themselves naked on the narrow bed in a passionate embrace. Clarissa, who had at one time accepted the possibility of being a

spinster for the rest of her life, was amazed at how simple and how overwhelming the love between a man and a woman could be.

Much later the two of them searched for Eloise who had obviously returned to her home. She was very constrained but fortunately her husband had to be introduced to Clarissa. Eloise stared at them, first in anguish but then she saw the glow emanating from the both of them. Guilt almost overwhelmed her.

“I’m so sorry I was such a bitch. I really didn’t know what I was doing! Can you both forgive me?”

Clarissa approached her shyly and hugged her. “Eloise. You can see how happy we are. Don’t brood about what didn’t happen. I know you were moved by love for your brother. Now we can love him together.”

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The city had quickly become an armed camp. Violent disorders were the order of the day. Many inhabitants had fled. A curfew for the military had been proclaimed by Washington who was heading the American forces in the city. In practice, it had little effect since most soldiers didn’t have uniforms and couldn’t be distinguished from the general population.

James knew about the rioting mobs who would attack anybody considered a Tory. Tar and feathers and railings were common. Being married to an English woman had sent the wrong signal. When the raucous crowd came, he had been ready for them. His saber was unsheathed and several loaded pistols were ready on a chair. As the crowd lumbered to his door, the catcalls and roar were deafening. James holding two pistols opened the door before they could crash through it. When a man who

appeared to be ahead of the others made mincing sounds followed by the roar of the crowd, James shot him.

“If you can’t see a true patriot that’s what you deserve!”

There was a sudden silence and then the crowd quickly dispersed as he leveled another pistol. The unruly men took their wounded companion and disappeared. But James realized how lucky he had been. Not too long afterwards James moved his small household to a little farm with the hope of isolating them from some of the unpleasant events. Although Clarissa was speechless, James thought that the idea of leaving New York had already started to form in her mind.

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James’s father had encouraged him to read of wars and strategy when he was a boy. Among the many books, James remembered reading in *Memoirs Concerning the Art of War* by Marshal Maurice de Saxe, the statement that for a successful general, “the first of all qualities is courage.” After his enlistment, and in midst of the fighting, James had seen Washington on horseback too close to the line of fire, examining the battleground. Courage he didn’t lack. Whether Washington had the fortitude to lead in what looked from its very beginning like a lost cause, James didn’t know.

Even before enlisting James had known the artillery was not sufficient, the gunpowder short, the raw and undisciplined American army at a clear disadvantage. The weapons were predominantly the flintlock musket although fowling pieces were also represented -- rarely, the very accurate long-barreled frontier rifle of Pennsylvania. The clothing was varied and slipshod in contrast to the impeccable figure of Washington, who always appeared in uniform as if he were on parade. Despite the

colonial's victory in seeing the British leave Boston, the march to New York had further weakened the army even though fresh recruits, mostly inexperienced, had also flocked into the city. An increase in the fortifications was deemed necessary and the men worked feverishly to complete them.

Once in the army, James had found out quickly that because of the lack of sanitation, the enemy included diseases -- dysentery, typhus and typhoid fever. For brief intervals smallpox also would sometimes rear its ugly head. Furthermore, the heavy consumption of rum did little for the American preparedness. Desertions and disease cut down the number and effectiveness of the American forces.

The British with more than one hundred ships had come in overwhelming numbers. They quickly established complete control of the waterways around New York. The fortifications and American cannons couldn't touch them.

Eloise's family and father had decided to move away from the conflict. She had a good friend in Albany who had offered hospitality. James insisted that Clarissa join them.

Days later, waiting behind the stone walls partitioning the land for the inevitable attack by the Redcoats, James's mind wandered with exhaustion, leading his thoughts into forbidden territory. All arguments with Clarissa, some imagined by his unsettled mind, came to the surface.

"What do you think this warfare will accomplish? All big words. Freedom. Justice. All men are equal. Not reality. What about law and order?"

"What about the laws that perpetuate wrongs? Sure the meaning of slogans is lost often enough. The world moves forward by small steps. In this case there are gains

and losses, but overall a small gain. I have to play a role in this war. I'm one of the few that has had any training."

"Don't be so sure that I will be here for you when you come back. Assuming they don't hang you."

What had it been that had played on his mind and led him to enlist? He had felt it to be an obligation. He couldn't visualize a logical alternative. The task of defeating the British was next to impossible, but it had to be done. He hoped that poor Clarissa wouldn't suffer too much and didn't mean what she had said about leaving him.

James had enlisted after the first defeat, when the colonial forces had had to withdraw from Brooklyn in a daring move under the cover of night and fog. After that he had been assigned to support the small contingent at the rearguard of the American forces headed by John Glover. Now again the main part of the American army had to withdraw to avoid annihilation. The battalion was there to delay the attackers and give a chance for the retreat to succeed. The Americans fought behind stone walls with deadly effectiveness. A British and Hessian contingent of four thousand was kept back for a full day by only seven hundred men, giving time to Washington to withdraw to White Plains. James found himself shooting as if it were a shooting gallery, and at the end of the day, he was exhausted as even his group had to withdraw.

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Eventually, James had been assigned to the forces under Gates in the vicinity of Saratoga. Because of his prowess with his long rifle he was placed with Morgan's riflemen in the battle for Bemis Heights and assigned to shoot from the trees. It was a long day of uninterrupted fighting.

Then his world changed. He suddenly found himself stretched out on the ground and thought for a moment he must be dying. The pain in his right shoulder was excruciating -- on the side of his head, a different kind of pain. The sound of intense shooting was all around him. Rifle shots in intense fusillades, and occasionally the roar of a cannon not too far from where he was. His head throbbed giving him a feeling of unreality. He explored with his left hand. The lack of blood either flowing out of his shoulder or sticking to the touch was puzzling. Stretched out on the ground, he knew that regardless of pain, regardless of discomfort he had to stay still, and he did so for a long time.

All he could remember was that he had been up in a tree sighting, shooting and reloading, shooting and reloading. The reverberation from his own shooting and that around him were still painful in his ears. The shooting continued around him.

He knew well that when in pain, minutes feel like hours. He must have passed out. After a long time, he was conscious of being lifted and carried. He learned later that he had been relayed to a makeshift hospital. Laying on matted leaves, out in the open, he'd been neglected for quite a while despite his moaning, his right arm twisted besides him. Then a man in an apron splattered with blood approached him. His gentle touch informed James that he was a doctor or an assistant.

"Oh! For goodness sake. They shouldn't have bothered me with this!" The man made James move to a make-shift bench and arrange himself in a prone position with his twisted arm free to move. Then he pulled James' right arm firmly. James actually heard a snap, felt an instant of even more intense pain and then nothing.

An improbable chuckle arose from the man with the splattered apron. "The treatment has been the same since the time of Caesar!"

"What about my head?"

"You were just damned lucky. A scratch -- the bullet must have just grazed you. A small bandage will suffice."

The battle was over but there was more to follow. So far it had been a victory. The American lines had held. The enemy was entrenched but more would come.

James was allowed to leave on a furlough, agreeing to rejoin his regiment soon. He knew Clarissa was staying somewhere around Albany. He had forgotten the name of the farm. Only a day after his trauma, he started walking cautiously but with determination. He certainly didn't want to be shot, scalped or taken prisoner and hid as much as possible whenever he noticed other travelers. His father's teaching of the tricks acquired when he had passed through Indian territories served James well.

It was all as in a strange dream -- hunger, thirst, exhaustion and the trauma of his injury . He hadn't brought any provisions and he drank from the streams he found along the way. It took him two days to get to the town. He spent a night in a barn, carefully avoiding alerting the farmer since he didn't know whether he would be a patriot or a Tory. Then in the afternoon of the second day, by the river he saw the houses and a semblance of normalcy. If the British broke through it would be all laid to waste.

He asked passersby whether they knew where he could find either the Stewarts or Mrs. Leviton. Finally an old woman knew where they were. He had to hike back some to find the farm. It was more like a plantation. Walking stiffly, dragging his feet, he approached the door of the mansion, canopied to service the discharge of passengers

from coaches. After he introduced himself, a diffident maid in uniform informed him reluctantly that Mrs. Leviton was in the vegetable garden, behind the house. These were uncertain and dangerous times and James looked disreputable as did most of the Continental Army.

And there she was. He swallowed hard. He didn't know what kind of reception was awaiting him. It had been a long time. Clarissa was leaning over some vegetables. She sensed his presence, straightened and looked around. They stood looking at each other with tears in their eyes. She ran into his open arms.

Her words came in whispers. "I didn't know if you had gotten my letters. I never knew where to send them."

"I received a few. I heard you were pregnant. I heard about our daughter."

Then she held him by the hand and said, "Come and meet Honoria. I hope you like the name. It was my grandmother's name."

"A lovely name. Besides she'll be know as Honey. Very appropriate."

Many anxious thoughts flooded through her mind. James looked like a wreck. Unshaven, dirty, emaciated. Was he going to stay? What was happening in Saratoga? But all had to be held back.

A placid Honoria looked up at her father. Now two, she didn't appreciate strangers. Clarissa was relieved by the little girl's solemn but calm expression. Then hell broke loose when Eloise entered the nursery with tears coursing her face.

"Oh! My God! James. You look terrible! Are you going to stay?"

Clarissa thought that's what sisters are for. To raise the unpleasant issues that have to be faced.

"I can't stay very long. You can try to fatten me up, but in one week you can't do much."

He took Clarissa's hand and asked, "Where can we be alone for a while?"

A room he surmised was used as a library had to suffice.

"Can I conclude that you're still my wife?"

"Oh, James. There was never any question, I love you. I thought I could leave but I just couldn't even if it might have been advantageous. If it hadn't been for Eloise, I would have had a very rough time. I'm ashamed of having parted from you in such a disloyal way! I hope you can forgive me."

"I didn't know whether to believe you but I never stopped loving you. I was relieved when I found out that you stayed with Eloise but I wasn't sure what it meant." After a while, "I can't believe how beautiful Honey is. Obviously she takes after you!"

Their saga was far from over, but James felt relief and satisfaction. He had a family and knew that they were in a circle of love. He left a week later. There were tears, smiles and laughter. War introduced a painful uncertainty but James knew that they were ready for any challenge.

