

Meade & Lee

Robert Scott

Jen Bryant tapped a graphite constellation in her history notebook. *Thirty-one seconds.* Her knee throbbed. *Get some ice on it.* She watched the clock and tapped her pencil in sync with the second hand, tap, tap, tap, across a lopsided, half-scribbled map of the Gettysburg battlefield. Tiny dots crowded the page: soldiers perhaps, climbing Little Round Top, charging up Cemetery Ridge or ducking cannon fire in the peach orchard.

Professor Shattuck droned as the inexorable black stalk tallied another minute.

Thirty-one seconds. 18:30. What's thirty-one seconds? She'd live for millions of them: eating, sleeping, sitting in traffic, waiting for knuckleheads with twenty-two items in the fifteen-item line. What happens in thirty-one seconds? Six breaths? A good long pee? Yet those seconds had been the difference between running at UVA, William and Mary, even Virginia Tech and running at Meade & Lee College. NCAA, division II. Second place.

The D-II Pennsylvania Conference Invitational was slated for Saturday at East Stroudsburg University. *Not U-Penn, Pitt or Penn State; they're division I.* Meade & Lee's cross country team would make the trip north. 'North of the Mason and Dixon survey,' Professor Shattuck would say, his gray moustache dangling too far over his lip. 'Be careful; some of them northerners are untrustworthy.'

Favored to win the women's open, a 6k, Jen had finished strong in three September meets. But the Penn Invitational would be her first genuine challenge of the season. She wondered if winning might give her a shot at a D-I scholarship next fall. *Do they give scholarships to transfer students? They have to; runners get injured, fail classes, get homesick.*

Tap, tap, tap.

'Ms. Bryant, what do you think?'

18:30. Thirty-one seconds off a 17:59, and a D-I scholarship. Jen's knee throbbed again; she hated these chairs. It had tightened up that day last fall, had cost her thirty-one seconds and more.

'Ms. Bryant?' Professor Shattuck called from his perch on the floor of the cavernous lecture hall, a stolen barstool from the looks of it. 'Are you with us, Ms. Bryant?'

'1830,' Jen blurted to a flurry of stifled giggles, shuffled paper.

'I'm sorry, but you're off by four touchdowns. It was 1863, but that wasn't my question.'

'I'm sorry, Dr. Shattuck.' Jen's face reddened to match her Meade & Lee warm-up jacket.

'I asked what you thought might have happened if Lee or perhaps Longstreet or Hill had reached Gettysburg a day earlier. You answered "1830," which has me and nearly two-hundred of your fellow students confused.'

Jen's flush deepened.

'Care to enlighten us?'

'Sorry.'

Professor Shattuck offered up a dramatic sigh, gestured to the rest of the hall. ‘Anyone else want a crack at it?’

Voices rose around her; Jen sank in her chair. The unwieldy, terraced seats provided little camouflage.

‘They might have established a position on the heights outside town,’ this from her left.

‘Good. Yes.’ Shattuck nodded.

‘They could have taken Gettysburg, dug in and forced Meade to shell his own city,’ someone behind her.

‘Not a popular strategy with the Gray Fox but why not? Anyone else?’

‘Lee could have used Gettysburg to resupply and turned either toward Harrisburg or Philadelphia, forced Meade to split the Army of the Potomac and defend two targets plus the southeast corridor to DC.’

Shattuck seemed to enjoy this response immensely. He grinned, stretching the bristly moustache over coffee-stained teeth. ‘Excellent. Of course, General Ewell had already been ordered to take Harrisburg. But yes, Gettysburg represented the intersection of several major roads through south-central Pennsylvania. A key city for either side. Excellent, all of you. But the truth is, we don’t know and will never know. Certainly scholars and historians have used all manner of primary source material to speculate as to what Lee might have done had he established a foothold north of the Maryland line, but he didn’t. And I would argue that the reason he didn’t is because Longstreet and Hill didn’t get to Gettysburg in time to take the high ground: Cemetery Hill, Cemetery Ridge, and Little and Big Round Tops, right along here.’ Shattuck aimed a laser pointer across a large, vintage map of Gettysburg and its surrounding battlefield. ‘One day. That’s all it took to dethrone the greatest military mind West Point had ever produced. Can you imagine it? What’s one day?’

Jen looked up at that.

‘How many days in a lifetime? Seventy-five, maybe eighty years’ worth? And how many do we sloth away on the sofa? Generals Longstreet and Hill were delayed *one day* here in Tottman Ridge, and that solitary day probably saved the Union. Had they arrived in Gettysburg one day earlier, the Confederates wouldn’t have failed to turn Meade’s flank on Little Round Top, wouldn’t have been so brutally pounded in Pickett and Hill’s charge up Cemetery Ridge – which really isn’t much of a ridge if you ever have a chance to see it. But most of all, Lee wouldn’t have limped back to Maryland with his thoroughly-whipped tail between his legs.’ Shattuck paused in deference to the wily Virginia strategist.

‘Professor?’

‘Yes, Mr. Filmore?’

‘Can you tell us more about the legend?’

‘The Native-American woman? The soldier dipped in blood?’

Jen had no idea what they meant, hadn’t cracked the spine on her textbook all semester. She decided to pay attention to this bit, perhaps pick up something the old rust bucket would include on a test.

‘Yes, sir.’

Shattuck swigged from a water bottle. Sitting up, he said, ‘Mind you, this is all in your Cromwell text, chapters four through six. Make sure you read those, because there’s

a great deal of speculation as to what truly happened that day. I want you to be familiar with each of the arguments.’

The voice – below and to Jen’s right – interrupted, ‘but what do *you* think, Professor?’

I think you’re a brown-nosing jackass.

The professor considered his response, as if deciding which of several dozen reels he might select for today’s answer; choose one, push *play*: same response, different semester. He struck a contemplative pose on the barstool, something trapped between *The Thinker* and a shitfaced Peter O’Toole.

‘I suppose the rendition I believe comes from a Union corporal, a young man from Baltimore named Samuel Hadley, writing to his wife. Corporal Hadley was with the Second Company of the Fifth Maryland Battalion of Sharpshooters. There were two platoons in that company, about eighty men that morning, on routine patrol along a wooded path near a stream between two corn fields.’ Shattuck stared at a point six rows up the aisle, transfixed by his own story. ‘They moved east to west along the stream until they started taking small arms fire from the south.’ He paused to add, ‘You all can visit the Tottman Ridge Battlefield if you like. It’s just on the other side of Eastman Drive, behind the 7-Eleven. The tour guide out there is Mary-Kate Sheffield. For a five-dollar donation, she’ll walk you up and down the stream where the majority of Union men fell, where they turned south and where they finally fixed bayonets and –’

‘– and followed that Native-American woman up that hill.’ The voice interrupted again. Jen craned her neck to see who it was.

‘– and allegedly followed *someone to safety*,’ Shattuck clarified, ‘*and* as luck would have it, a position from which to turn the Confederate forward ranks and drive them down into the stream. Whether it was a bloody soldier or a Native-American woman, I don’t know, but suffice to say, it was someone either out of uniform or so bloodied that he . . . or she, I suppose . . . appeared blood red to Corporal Hadley and others who recount the battle, including the young Confederate lieutenant leading the forward Rebel platoon, Rawlings Stevenson of Richmond.

‘Confederate artillery had been hustled forward, because with J.E.B. Stuart’s absence no one knew how many Union men they faced. This could have been the entire Army of the Potomac. And by forward, I mean artillery had been rolled close enough to fire with some accuracy, maybe a thousand yards to the south, but they started lobbing shells into the narrow draw between the two fields.’

‘Killing their own men,’ Jen whispered to no one.

‘They cannonaded their own soldiers.’ Shattuck went on, ‘An unholy mess. Longstreet and Hill waited right here in Tottman Ridge for a full day and night unraveling what happened. The division band even played a few tunes over on the common behind the public library. What remained of the Union company retreated toward Baltimore in hopes of alerting General Meade, but by the time riders reached the Army of the Potomac, they were already engaged at Gettysburg.’

‘But professor, what about Corporal Hadley and the bloody runner, the Indian woman?’

‘First-American,’ someone corrected.

‘Whatever.’

‘Sorry folks, but time’s up.’ Shattuck stretched, checked his notes. ‘Don’t forget we have a test next Wednesday on the Gettysburg campaign and the Battle of Tottman Ridge. Read your Cromwell this weekend, especially *you*, Ms. Bryant.’

Students were packing up bags, closing notebooks, donning jackets. Jen hoped the noise had been enough to muffle the old professor’s admonition. In the upper hallway, she avoided embarrassing eye contact with her classmates, and moved quickly through the corridor toward the common outside.

‘18:30? That’s a 5k time, unless you’re Lorna Kiplagat.’ Arthur Daniels leaned against a bulletin board filled with carpool notices and mid-semester exam schedules. Like most runners, Arthur was wiry and strong. He looked good in faded jeans, an untucked dress shirt and a pair of Asics that had easily seen nine-hundred miles of cross country training. The number-six man on the squad, Arthur specialized in short-distance track events. He claimed only to run cross country to burn calories from pizza and donuts.

‘It is,’ Jen said. ‘So what?’

‘This is college. You run six-thousand meters now.’ He dropped his backpack, pulled on a red Meade & Lee jacket that matched hers and nodded toward the door. ‘Heading out?’

Something moved quickly through Jen’s mind. It dissipated before she could get a solid grip on it. But what she felt in its wake was that right here would be fine for now. *Talk to him about it. He’s a runner.*

Arthur read her mind. ‘What was it? State championships?’

‘Regions . . . I, uh –’

‘I see,’ he ran a hand through his hair. ‘That’s a tough one. Where’d you want to go?’

‘Dunno. D-I somewhere.’

‘But you ended up here at good old Meade & Lee, a competitive division II program but not . . . Tech? UVA?’

‘How’d you know?’

‘The freshman phenom from Fairfax, Virginia!’ Arthur mimicked a caffeinated WWF announcer.

‘You heard.’ Her face flushed again.

‘Of course,’ he said. ‘You’re big news. Take it from me, a D-II athlete on his best day with a strong wind at his back and a rack of competition down with Avian flu.’

Jen smiled; she caught him looking and turned her face to the floor. It was too much self consciousness for one morning. She worried she might laugh and blow a river of snot out her nose or have some remnant of breakfast clutching her teeth.

‘So you ran 18:30?’

‘I did . . . my knee tightened up. When word of that got out, I not only lost –’

‘By . . .’

‘By thirty-one seconds,’ she said.

‘Ouch. And you didn’t get signed anywhere: damaged goods.’

‘You’re insightful.’

‘Why relive it now?’ Arthur seemed genuinely interested. ‘I’ve seen you run; you’re a beautiful runner . . . I mean . . . you run like I wish I ran or . . . could run

sometimes, you know.’ Jen felt the flush drain from her cheeks. It was Arthur’s turn to redden.

‘Are you going to East Stroudsburg Friday night?’ she asked.

‘For the open? Sure. Except for the two-hundred runners who’ll finish in front of me, I fully intend to return home victorious.’

‘I’m glad you’re going,’ she said to her shoes. *Look at him, dumbass. It won’t hurt; just look up.*

‘Me too.’ Uncomfortable silence settled between them. Arthur finally said, ‘You know, Shattuck isn’t kidding about getting the reading done.’

The knot in Jen’s stomach unraveled. ‘You know him well?’

‘Third time’s a charm,’ he grinned, sheepish this time.

‘You failed this class twice already?’

‘Nah, just once, but I figure if I blow it this semester, next spring will be a lead-pipe cinch.’

‘Are the tests tough? I’m worried.’

‘Nope,’ he waved her off. ‘The thing to remember about Professor Shattuck is that he believes US History from 1789 to 1865 begins and ends on June 28, 1863.’

‘That Battle of Tottman Ridge?’

‘Battle? Whale snot. You heard him. The forward platoons of Longstreet’s divisions squaring off against a company of wandering Union boys from Baltimore – a skirmish at best. The artillery was firing from three-quarters of a mile away. He talks it up, because he needs to justify the five or six articles he’s written on the legend.’

‘The woman?’

‘The bloody soldier, the Indian woman, who knows? And the Cromwell book doesn’t help. Although, that woman is where we get our nickname.’

‘Nickname?’

‘The Running Reds.’

Jen winced. ‘Yikes! Politically correct stuff, huh?’

‘Hey, I didn’t make it up,’ he raised his hands in apology. ‘Anyway, old Shattuck gets himself all fired up about it every semester, likes to hear the students argue about which version makes the most sense.’

‘You’ve got his number.’

‘I’ve taken the class a couple times; I’m pacing myself, getting prepared for a great showing . . . maybe next semester.’

Jen giggled, then swallowed hard, cutting herself off. ‘Are you running tomorrow?’

‘Yup. Then I’ll take Friday off. You?’

‘Intervals.’

‘Great,’ Arthur took a step toward her; Jen fought the urge to snuggle between his running jacket and that wash-and-wear dress shirt. ‘Run with me tomorrow. Coach won’t mind.’

‘What’s on deck?’ Jen asked.

‘For intervals, I like to take a long slow jog about eight miles and then run the last two-hundred meters hard enough to almost finish out of breath. How about you?’

‘A warm-up mile, a hard twelve hundred, a mile jog, a full-out eight hundred, a mile jog, a four-hundred meter sprint, a mile jog, a two-hundred meter sprint, and a mile cool down.’ *You’re showing off, dumbass.*

‘Jesus,’ Arthur looked to have swallowed something jagged. ‘Are you human? Who takes a whole mile to cool down? Why not just collapse in the grass and fall asleep?’

Jen covered her face with one hand, hoping she wouldn’t snort. ‘No,’ she fought for composure. Flirting was one thing, but she was making a fool of herself. ‘No. I’m just a serious runner; that’s all. Intervals are hard training; they pay off in endurance and speed.’

‘I’ll need a goddamn Med-Evac helicopter, but I will run your merciless, gut wrenching, torture course if . . .’

‘If what?’

‘If you finish the day at my place, pizza and beer tomorrow night.’ Arthur looked away, tried to make eye contact with her and looked away again, pretending to see someone he knew crossing the common.

‘Beer? We have the open on Saturday.’

‘Right. That’s two days away.’

‘It’s *beer*; you don’t drink beer during the season.’

‘Oh my poor, misguided, little running phenom, how little they taught you back home.’ Arthur put an arm around her shoulders. Jen thought about wriggling away but then decided she was having too much fun, and let herself be swallowed up. ‘It’s glycogen. Your body doesn’t care. Too many runners make that mistake; they spend all season nibbling energy bars that taste like yesterday’s laundry. Do you know what they become before they fire up your attractive little Virginian mitochondria?’

‘Let me guess: glycogen.’

‘We have a winner,’ Arthur drew his arm back, turned to face her. All at once serious, he said, ‘Come on. Run with me tomorrow. We can run Shattuck’s moldy battlefield. It’ll be fun, and after we’ll hang out, watch movies, drink Gatorade; I don’t care. Come on; say yes.’

‘It’s the season, Arthur. I usually don’t, you know . . . during the season. I’m serious about getting —’

‘Getting out of here?’ His smile evaporated; it broke her heart to see it go. ‘Come on, how many guys agree to go running with a girl on the first date?’

‘Woman.’

‘Even better! Hell, I’ve been trying to date a *woman* for years. I thought for a while there was a town ordinance against it.’ Arthur opened the door, ushered her onto the common.

‘Alright,’ she said. *Put your arm around me again. C’mon, just for a second or thirty-one, whatever.*

‘Excellent.’ He gave a little hop, bouncing on his toes. ‘What time?’

‘5:00.’

‘That’s late. Do you have afternoon classes tomorrow?’

‘A.m.’

Arthur’s backpack slid off his shoulder in a wrinkled lump. ‘They have medicine for what’s wrong with you.’

'5:30?'

'How about 3:30 p.m. on my course, with pizza and beer at my place?'

Jen screwed up her face in mock consideration. '3:30 p.m. on *my* course, with pizza and beer at *my* place.'

'You're giving in on the beer?'

'Sure; it's just glycogen.'

'But I have to run the Death Program.'

'Right.'

'Movies at my place?'

'My place.'

'You live in a dorm.' Arthur's face contorted.

'Residence hall,' Jen frowned in her best imitation of an irritated Head Resident.

'Sorry, *residence hall*.' He acquiesced. 'Done.'

'Until tomorrow then,' Jen reached into the empty space between them. She wasn't sure what she meant to do with her hand and pulled it back quickly. She blushed a final time for good measure.

Arthur turned toward the student center. 'Tomorrow.'

The charter bus hummed a resonant drone. The Meade & Lee cross country teams shared transportation, but even with a trainer and all four coaches, there was ample room for both squads. Some runners chatted about the open, their times and how well they had kicked to finish strong or not-so strong. Others complained about the mud and the slick turns, where several had fallen. Some listened to iPods, read textbooks or schlock novels, and ate fast food from a place outside Allentown. Most tried to sleep. It would be late when they arrived on campus, and with no formal practice until Tuesday afternoon, many looked forward to catching the tail end of a party before bed.

The battery in Jen's iPod had died; she was glad to have brought along her history textbook. With three hours left in the trip, she hoped to finish enough reading to sleep in, eat a late breakfast and be guilt free after taking the morning off.

She had run well: 22:05 over six kilometers, placing third overall and finishing only eighteen seconds behind the leader, a senior from Loch Haven who would be among the fastest runners at the D-II national championships. Jen hoped that with harder speed workouts and longer intervals each week, she could be among the top fifty at nationals.

She opened to chapter four in her Cromwell book, where a daguerreotype of Corporal Samuel Hadley glared back at her, unamused. Jen looked at it closely, then held the book up to the small reading light. There was something oddly familiar about Hadley's face. She couldn't recall where she had seen him but flipped to the photo again before attempting to lose herself in the text.

The excruciating writing only held her attention because Jen figured each absurd detail would probably end up on Shattuck's test. She had to sit up, lifting her shoulders from the comfortable seat just to keep from dozing. She skipped around, ignoring most of the tiresome descriptions of troop movements and carnage:

. . . speculation began shortly after the Gettysburg Campaign and has continued ever since . . . no shortage of arguments, deductions and inferences as to what occurred outside the small Maryland village of Tottman Ridge on the morning of June 28, 1863 . . . Lee had moved north in his first foray above the Pennsylvania line . . . delayed approximately twenty-six hours . . . one can only speculate why Longstreet and Hill did not dispatch at least one mounted platoon forward until the following day.

Holy crap, this is boring. What the hell's a "foray"? I gotta sit up . . . gonna pass out.

It would have been obvious, even riding essentially blind . . . that the Second Company of the Fifth Maryland Battalion of Sharpshooters did not represent the sum forces of the Army of the Potomac . . . eventually, all arguments settle on the appearance of a Native-American woman, dashing forward through the Maryland ranks to guide the confused and battered company southwest, around the hillock and into the western flank of the forward Rebel ranks . . . a bold strategy given the fact that just over eighty Union sharpshooters found themselves facing the bulk of Longstreet's divisions . . . unreasonable to suggest that an Algonquin woman, probably of a Delaware tribe would be anywhere near Tottman Ridge, Maryland in the summer of 1863.

Christ, now he's having a go at the Indians, Native Americans, whatever. I need a coffee. Sit up. C'mon, just a couple more pages!

. . . still some Native Americans in the area, but the majority of the Delaware nation had been driven west – ironically by US military and cavalry forces over the previous century . . . more likely, the red color Lieutenant Stevenson claims to have seen that morning was a trick of the light . . . a soldier who had been gravely wounded and lived long enough to make a wild charge . . . the decision to follow the injured man was the sole responsibility of the Union captain, Robert Morrison of Annapolis, who wrote of the Native-American woman in a report to Major Whitward of the Fifth Maryland Sharpshooters (see also: Cromwell, 2006, Hackford, 1997, and Smelting, 2010) but later recanted and even lectured on the skirmish during his tenure as a professor . . . despite Lt. Stevenson's ravings and his eventual fall from grace with the Confederate officer corps, he held to his story until his death in 1897, claiming in his personal journal that the *'raving redskinned squaw screamed at me, something I have not, despite my efforts and the efforts of those few who place credence in my word and worth as a Confederate officer and a Virginian, been able to decipher, even researching her unintelligible shouts and any familiarity they might have to the venerable and essentially-lost Algonquin tongue (Shattuck, 1994, 65)'* . . . can only come to rest with Corporal Hadley's level-headed account of a wounded soldier bleeding badly and making a final charge through the cornfield to his death.

"Raving redskinned squaw." Say that five times fast and see how quick the campus PC police put your picture online, Lieutenant Stevenson. Sorry . . . Rawlings. Heh, Rawlings.

. . . Lee's generals found no Native-American remains in the cornfield or along the stream, thus leading historians away from Morrison and Stevenson's accounts to settle on Corporal Hadley's recollection as closest to the relative truth . . . in response to the Army of Northern Virginia's failure to find any evidence that a Delaware Indian woman led Union sharpshooters to victory that morning, Lt. Stevenson wrote that he had '*witnessed the young girl's death when an incendiary shell exploded at her feet, killing her instantly and casting her remains to the four corners of the field (Shattuck, 1994, 67).*'

Hmm. Shitty day to be a Native American woman, I guess.

. . . any blame that is to be cast on the Army of Northern Virginia for failing to engage the Army of the Potomac from a more advantageous position in Gettysburg rests entirely with General Robert E. Lee and his staff.

Jen flipped to an insert on Rawlings Stevenson then mined through her bag for a highlighter. Arthur appeared suddenly, rescuing her from Cromwell's clutches. 'Hey, what's doing?'

She closed the text. 'Thank God. I was hoping you'd come by.'

He gestured toward the back of the bus. 'Yeah, Coach wanted to debrief. How're you doing? I saw you run; you were . . . well . . . beautiful *again*.'

Jen's eyes widened; her stomach clenched with a colony of ADHD butterflies. *Get a hold of yourself, dumbass. You look like hell. Fix your hair.* 'I saw you, too. Not bad, Arthur.'

'Yeah, how about it? I finished in the top hundred and was only off the leader by 2:12. That's downright hustling for me.'

'You looked good, a strong finish.'

'Nah. Come see me in the spring. I promise you that after New Year's Day, I never run farther than eight-hundred meters.'

'I look forward to it.'

'How's your knee?'

'A little tight. Thanks for asking.' She rubbed the offending joint through her warm-up pants. 'I'm going to jog it out in the next couple days, maybe tomorrow or Monday morning. You wanna come with me?' Jen's voice cracked a little; she cursed herself for sounding too eager.

'Not me,' Arthur said, then added, 'not that I wouldn't want to, but I'm still recovering from your Death Run, and I did give an honest effort today. So I'm hanging them up until Tuesday afternoon.'

'Beer tonight, I presume?'

'And Chinese – right before going to bed – nothing better.'

I love that you can make me laugh. 'You have reading to do?'

Arthur shrugged, 'Yeah, but we're almost home. Why bother getting started?'

'We're two hours away.'

'Right. Not worth opening the backpack now. What're you reading? Is that Cromwell?'

‘Guilty.’

‘Oh, don’t let me interrupt. That text reads like a spy adventure . . . minus the excitement, suspense, action and, well, anything fun about spy novels.’

‘I’m reading the Tottman Ridge stuff now. Actually, bits of it are interesting. It’s like an old mystery no one will ever solve.’

‘That’s true. I guess that part’s the most exciting story of the semester.’ He thought a moment, then said, ‘You ought to run the battlefield. It’s nice over there; out and back it’s about six miles. That ought to loosen up your knee.’

‘Alright. Maybe it’ll help some of this information stick to my brain.’ She thumped the textbook with a knuckle.

‘Ah, that problem. I know it well; mine’s coated with Teflon.’

‘How do I get there?’

‘Just follow College Avenue across Eastman Drive by the 7-Eleven. Go around behind the post office and head into that field. There’ll be a stream on your right and a big hickory tree on your left. You can’t miss it. That’s the spot where the Union guys began their patrol.’

‘Alright, but if I get lost, I’m calling you.’

‘I wish you would,’ Arthur whispered and leaned in to kiss her. Jen wasn’t ready and shifted awkwardly to accommodate him. They ducked down, hid behind the backrests. She reveled in his touch. *This is your night, my friend. All you have to do is ask.*

Instead, Arthur backed away slightly, leaned in for a final kiss, then ran a hand through his hair.

God, you’re adorable.

‘Sorry,’ he stammered, ‘sorry.’

‘Don’t be,’ Jen hid her breathlessness. ‘Kiss me again.’

He did, quickly, then said, ‘I gotta go. If Coach sees us . . .’

‘Yeah, I know.’

He laughed, a frustrated exhalation that spoke volumes. ‘Whew.’

‘Later?’ Jen asked.

Arthur nodded, gave her hand a gentle squeeze and moved to the back of the bus.

Dazed, Jen hefted the Cromwell text. She knew she wouldn’t be able to read, not for a few glorious minutes. Yet she wanted to look occupied in case one of her teammates caught her gaping.

There was Corporal Hadley, looking serious and uncomfortable in his uniform and staring at a point somewhere behind the camera. The reading light glared off Hadley’s forehead in a momentary glint that blinded her. Jen blinked her vision clear and realized why Samuel Hadley seemed so familiar. The young Union non-com looked like Professor Shattuck’s son – or as she’d expect the old turd might have appeared in his youth. Jen leaned closer, confirmed for herself: Hadley was a dead ringer for a young Professor Shattuck.

She never finished chapter four. If she had, Jen would have seen a similar picture of the Confederate lieutenant, Rawlings Stevenson, taken shortly before departing his family’s ancestral home outside Richmond in 1861.

She ran in the sliver of grass separating the concrete sidewalk from the macadam ribbon of College Avenue.

Running. There was nothing like it. Non runners could never understand. Jen had read that quitting cigarettes was more difficult than quitting cocaine. She had no doubt that quitting running would be even tougher than that. Her teammates joked about being forced to give up running or give up men. Almost all of them said they would rather give up running. Jen had laughed along, but she knew better: that choice would be easy. Thankfully, she didn't have to make it and pulled the collar of her Meade & Lee sweatshirt over her nose in hopes of finding some of Arthur's scent still clinging to her body. Sadly, the intoxicating aroma had already been quashed by the stink of her own musty perspiration. *Call it sweat, and get your ass moving.*

Cool breeze blew from the north as the Maryland countryside woke. Jen wore warm-up pants along with the sweatshirt. She had been drinking beer the past two nights and wanted to sweat it out before tomorrow's practice. The long pants also helped keep her knee warm over the first mile. It was her knee Jen worried about as she crossed Eastman, passed through the 7-Eleven parking lot, and slipped beneath the outstretched arms of the hickory tree Arthur had described.

She jogged across the first field, following the stream while waiting for the telltale sting in her knee to herald six weeks of season-ending rehab.

About a mile farther on, the temperature changed, rising inexplicably. Hanging behind the horizon, the sun whitened Tottman Ridge with gathering dawn, but the temperature felt as though it'd climbed twenty degrees. Jen ran on the winding path that paralleled the stream and led battlefield visitors between two sloping meadows, cornfields in 1863 but fallow this season with knee-high grass and sedge.

Holy crap, it got hot. Shouldn't have worn this sweatshirt. She wiped her face. *Too busy getting laid, dumbass. Well, this'll teach you, let's go; let's earn this one.*

A quarter mile later, Jen slowed, then stopped. 'What're you doing?' she panted, 'Get moving.' Uncertainty found the soft edge of her consciousness and latched on.

She turned, hoping to find the distant glow of the 7-Eleven. Alien stalk lights around the parking lot watched over the corner of College and Eastman. But she had come too far to see it. A grumpy, whitewashed farmhouse with a dilapidated barn stood silent nearby. No lights shone in the windows, above the barn doors, or even on the porch. Staring into the yard like a voyeur, Jen realized what seemed strange: it wasn't the lights but rather the sound of traffic on Eastman that eluded her.

Were there cars? Nah, too early. Get moving.

She smelled woodsmoke, then something tangy, like spoiled milk or bad beef, and looked around for whatever might have died. A wisp of fog blew past, an errant ghost tumbling towards Baltimore. Jen spat in the mud and kicked for the stream bed. *Better to be moving, anyway. No sense stopping.*

Used to running alone, even in unfamiliar places, Jen was fast. An assailant would have to be a world class rapist to catch her. The sense of foreboding she had somehow picked up from the field, the stream and the strangely darkened farmhouse wasn't rubbing off though. She decided to try and shake it. Dropping her hands a few inches, Jen pushed her hips forward and abandoned her leisurely jog for a hard interval. In the northeast corner of the meadow, the path wound lazily west. Jen sprinted, leaned with the

turn and counted: 97 . . . 98 . . . 99 . . . 100. She slowed, breathing hard and feeling better. Her knee had held up well.

Then she saw them.

Painted morning gold, the men might have been narrow trees along the streambed, their trunks suddenly animated and hustling westward. There were others behind as well, coming up fast.

What the hell? Get out of here!

She looked south toward Eastman. The interval had worn her out, but a rush of adrenaline hit her bloodstream hard.

'Jen!' A shout from up ahead.

'What? Who said that?' She turned back, felt her knee revolt, 'Damn!'

Jogging now, Jen searched through the group of strangers; one young man looked back at her.

'Jen!' He waved, beckoning the others west. 'Men!' It came again, *not 'Jen.'* 'Men,' just 'men.'

Wait a second . . . oh, this is some kind of silly show, some reenactment.

Relieved, she stopped, watched them and realized that they were Union soldiers decked out in woolly period dress. Excited at the screwball luck of having run this way on the day of a reenactment, Jen hoped old Shattuck would be here as well. It could be worth extra points on her mid-term. When she tried to move from center stage of the Tottman Ridge reenactment, however, she pulled up short. Her way had been blocked by corn stalks: waist high, late-spring corn stalks growing as far as she could see.

Oh shit, what's this? Sweat dampened her face; her limbs felt as if they'd been dipped in concrete.

'Jen!'

She elbowed through the stalks, trying to find a row wide enough for her to run south to Eastman Drive. What sounded like a small animal – something slithery and dangerous – came from her right, then her left. She heard another rustle through the corn; then the one on her right moved again, closer. She sucked air through her mouth, ran wildly, careening between the stalks, impossible corn stalks that hadn't been there, that had grown three feet in thirty seconds.

Thirty-one seconds.

Now, chased through untidy rows by slithery creatures, Jen would feel them soon enough; one would catch her ankle.

A second group of men materialized in the gathering dawn. About a hundred yards south, some rode horses while others jogged alongside. These were different, though: Confederates. The one on the horse – *do I know him?* – stared at her, shouted something she couldn't make out. Then another dry rustle, closer still, made it apparent what she heard rushing through the stalks.

Good mother of Christ, they're shooting at me, real bullets.

The smoke and pop of distant rifles preceded the thin whine of musket balls passing within a few feet as Jen ran. Some crashed through the corn, sounding like slithery, insidious creatures. Others whistled overhead to nick and snap branches in the hardwood grove lining the stream – the sound of bones breaking.

Jen's knee tightened. She wondered how much longer she could run. Sweat stung her eyes as she made for the stream. Coming free from the corn, she turned west and

kicked into a full sprint. Her mantras took over: *run with your legs, not your lungs, run with your legs, not your lungs*. She picked up speed, ignored her knee, and closed quickly on the Union soldiers.

Several paused to fire at the advancing Rebel line, the noisy bark of rifles miniature explosions in the now muggy morning. Jen smelled burned powder on the breeze. Snapping and breaking bones continued as musket rounds whistled past. One struck the dirt near her feet. Tufts of grass and earth were tossed toward the streambed. The worn path Mary-Kate Sheffield used to take visitors on roundabout tours of the Tottman Ridge battlefield had disappeared as quickly as the corn stalks had arisen to take over the fallow meadow.

Jen hurdled a fallen soldier. Most of his face had been torn away, revealing mud-caked sinews and crooked, yellow teeth. The soggy vestiges of a cheekful of tobacco slid over his split earlobe in a grimy smear. He lay still, his blue jacket edged in gold as the sun rose.

Impossible. This is impossible.

Ahead, others fell. Some, still alive, writhed, snakelike, as they dragged themselves into the relative protection of the stream bed. They left blood trails as they crawled, some thick with viscous red syrup, something she might have seen once in a film but that here seemed darker, almost black as it seeped into the ground. Then: screaming, incoherent and unnerving; it rose like fog from all around. One soldier took a musket slug in the chest; the bullet ripped out between his shoulder blades with a hollow thud and a raspberry spray of warm fluid. That one didn't scream, just tumbled backwards into the sumac.

Stop. You've got to stop. They're hurt.

She didn't.

'Jen!'

She ran forward with nowhere else to go. The only protection looked to be around a knoll formed by the lazy hill of the cornfield as it dipped to the stream bed, then climbed to a grassy meadow two-hundred yards farther on.

'Jen! Up here! Men!'

Who's calling me . . . what's . . .

She easily passed the Union soldiers. A few cried out; some warned her to get down or to turn back. *There is no back; it's worse back there*. She ran, arms down, hips forward, barely touching the balls of her feet to the warm June dirt. *That's right: it's June, 1863. October's gone*.

She recognized the young man leading the battered Union line. With a sidearm, a saber, and a ridiculous gold braid over his shoulder – *chicken guts; that's what Shattuck calls them* – she'd found Captain Morrison of Annapolis. With him ran the Second Company of the Fifth Maryland Battalion of Sharpshooters. Another soldier hurried ahead of the captain, the younger man, the one who'd called her by name. He turned once to fire blindly into the Confederate line; Jen saw his face, the line his features cut in the rising sun. It was him; there was no doubt that man was Professor Shattuck.

Read your Cromwell this weekend, especially you, Ms. Bryant.

'Corporal!' Captain Morrison screamed. The young version of her American History professor turned, slowing to a walk while his hands worked, seemingly of their own volition, to reload his rifle.

‘Sir?’ Corporal Hadley replied.

‘We have to dig in, form a rank. Use the streambed for whatever cover you can, but we have to dig in.’

Hadley grimaced. ‘Captain, that hill, there . . . the meadow, that’s cover, sir. We don’t know how many there are. It could be all of Longstreet’s corps!’

Jen didn’t slow. Instead, running past both men, she shouted, ‘Eastman! We have to get back to Eastman!’

Too terrified, too overwhelmed to stop, to think about what might happen if the Union ranks dug in along the stream bed, Jen didn’t mind that two characters from her history text had somehow interrupted her morning run. She didn’t care that one of them was a professor at Meade & Lee College, a small school with a solid division II cross country program. She had peed her warm-up pants; it dribbled between her legs, warmer than sweat. But Jen Bryant didn’t mind that either.

Eastman Drive; just get to Eastman Drive.

Corporal Hadley shouted.

Jen ignored him. She led the Union line now and ran full tilt around the knoll in the cornfield. If the Confederate soldiers came straight north, the hill would provide cover. If they turned east to pursue the northern sharpshooters, the hill would mask her flight almost all the way to the 7-Eleven. If the Rebel line turned northwest . . . they’d ride right over her. She didn’t fiddle much with that possibility. Jen had nowhere to go but through the field. Still running, she glanced back only once, but what Jen Bryant saw aroused a thimbleful of hazy recall: the Union soldiers, led by Corporal Hadley and Captain Morrison, followed.

‘Although, that woman is where we get our nickname.’

‘Nickname?’

‘The Running Reds.’

She looked down: red warm-up pants beneath a red Meade & Lee sweatshirt. *Oh my God, it’s me. It can’t be me. It was an Algonquin woman, a Delaware woman, a Native American, First American, whatever. They aren’t really red, like red, like a fire engine. I look like a fire engine. Christ, Jesus Christ, help me!*

Rhythmic thunder – like un-tuned kettle drums – rumbled darkly in the south. Jen’s bowels contracted when the first cannonballs landed behind her. Some struck with tremendous crashes, then bounced off through the trees, inflicting devastating compound fractures on already splintered hardwoods. Others exploded. One hit the ground nearby and burst in a cataclysm of mud and torn turf. Nearly thrown off her feet, Jen stumbled, dug in with her toes and kept running. When she wiped the sweat from her eyes, her hand came away damp with blood.

She hadn’t felt anything.

Jen turned up the hill, about the worst decision she could make given the advancing Confederate line. But she had to get clear of the artillery, couldn’t stay here. With firing behind her, firing east along field’s edge, firing across the stream and cannonballs exploding in the gully, uphill remained the only path, and the shortest route back to 7-Eleven.

Corporal Hadley – Professor Shattuck – cried, ‘No, Jen, not up there!’ He might have yelled ‘men,’ but Jen didn’t listen. She kept running, screaming for Eastman Drive

and climbing toward the Confederate ranks. Atop the knoll, she came face to face with a trim Rebel officer astride a chestnut horse.

She had seen him a few minutes – *a few seconds, maybe thirty-one seconds* – earlier when the gray ranks had appeared in the corn. Lieutenant Rawlings Stevenson from Richmond stared back at her. The young officer claimed until his death that he and his platoon had been flanked by a wild Delaware Indian woman leading the remnants of a Union company around a blind hill: a bold battlefield strategy, because it was essentially suicide.

Why Stevenson hesitated and was driven into his own artillery fire – a decision evaluated in detail in Robert Cromwell's Meade & Lee, chapter four – was for another reason, however.

Cresting the hill, Jen heard Captain Morrison come up behind, now shouting, 'Yes! Yes! To me men! To me!' He fired his sidearm and waggled his saber like a platoon standard. Corporal Hadley followed, flanked by what remained of the Second Company of the Fifth Maryland Battalion of Sharpshooters.

Jen doubled over, panting, crying, wiping blood from her face and waiting for the Confederate officer to draw his own saber and slice her open. After three or four ragged breaths, she raised her head, squinted to see him clearly through the blood and smoke.

Arthur Daniels.

Union soldiers poured over the knoll, surprising Arthur's platoon and forcing them into the gully beside the stream, into the artillery killing field. Lieutenant Stevenson – Arthur – hesitated before leading his men away. Perhaps he hoped to regroup, to ascertain how many soldiers came against him, or perhaps he hoped to give his men a few seconds to fix bayonets and engage the northerners hand-to-hand. But he did none of those things. Instead, he stared at the wild-eyed woman standing just a few feet away.

Thunder rumbled again. A piercing, overhead whine drowned out Morrison and Hadley's cries. A devastating explosion ruptured the morning. Jen Bryant, still standing atop Tottman Ridge, disappeared in a shower of dirt, stones and shattered corn stalks.

In the student center at Meade & Lee College, Arthur Daniels looked up from a cup of coffee he had been sipping while underlining key passages in his Cromwell text. Professor Shattuck's test was on for Wednesday, and Arthur had wiled away the weekend, sleeping too late and drinking beer with Jen.

He checked at his watch: 8:45 a.m. It would be over by now. Another reparation offered; another guilty remittance paid.

Across the fishbowl room, Professor Shattuck entered through the double doors, picked up a campus newspaper and glanced at the front page while waiting for a student behind the counter to pour him a cup of coffee. Catching Arthur's eye over the folded sheets, he raised an eyebrow, inquiring.

Arthur nodded without remorse. *It's done.*