

*I wanted desperately to cut General Sherman's throat, but I would have to touch him to do that.*

## Chapter 2

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Lorena Boykins Oakwood was, in this fourth year of the Civil War, twenty-two years old. She had dark green Irish eyes and alabaster skin so valued by Southern women. Her face, an aristocratic legacy from her mother, was so pale one would suspect her flaming red hair had drained it of its blood.

Square of jaw, determined of mind, she wore large floppy hats with black veils, long sleeved dresses, and black gloves, which prevented the Georgia sun from otherwise marring her pale, blue veined complexion. A gentleman could span her tiny waist with his two hands, and her erect posture displayed a full bosom.

Her manner was composed and reticent. It came about through years of diligent training by her autocratic grandmother, her black nanny, and a certain tyrannical, Madame Talvandes,

who ran the *French School for Young Ladies* in Charleston, South Carolina.

Her features showed the handsome blend of her Portuguese mother and Irish father. However, it was Lorena's eyes that betrayed her. They burned with a lust for life, and exuded a willful sexuality that escaped her husband, but was readily discerned by other men. Although she was never unfaithful to John Oakwood, she was sought after and extremely popular with many military officers and statesmen at the highest level of Southern society for her wit and congeniality.

When Lorena married, she came from South Carolina to this place in Georgia soon after the railroad people named it Terminus. It was called by that name because the new, vibrant, burgeoning town was at the junction of three important train terminals.

As the town grew, a bright idea occurred to former Georgia governor Lumpkin and he, with a not inconsiderable monetary gift, influenced the city to call the new town after his only daughter, Martha. Thereafter it was called Marthasville.

As the city burst forth into a bustling metropolis the city fathers wanted a new name, something ambitious and exciting, in keeping with the new city's energy.

Jumping in to the rescue was Governor Lumpkin once more. After donating another goodly, but undisclosed sum of money, he recommended to the city fathers they call it

Atlanta. They rejoiced and accepted the new name, thinking they had named it after the mythical kingdom, Atlantis. Little did they realize that his daughter Martha's middle name was Atalanta. Mr. Lumpkin and Martha kept their secret until they died.

Lorena Oakwood would never tell her age exactly, and even kept that little privacy from her husband. She was born into an aristocratic Southern family, her father being a United States Senator, and her mother, an accomplished violinist, all of them ruled by a martinet grandmother.

She married well at seventeen. But her father-in-law turned out to be tight fisted. The old man was quite wealthy, and owned a thousand slaves on four separate plantations, but his only son had been given very little and had his name on nothing.

However, the son, John Oakwood, was a Harvard graduate and ambitious. He went to that prestigious New England school after spending a year at West Point. He was also a rising political star. Before the war he was an alderman in Atlanta, and planned, before the beginning of hostilities at Fort Sumter, to run against the incumbent, Joe Brown, for Governor of Georgia.

As most Southern women did, Lorena ignored her husband's penchant for drinking, riding, shooting, and clandestine whoring with slave girls.

After marriage she kept her charm and

beauty, and he came early to a man's responsibility.

When the War Between the States began, John Oakwood dropped his political ambitions and joined a company raised by fellow Georgian, Robert Toombs.

Oakwood was voted captain of the company because of his popularity and also because of his year at West Point. On his father's plantation he had learned to be a good administrator and he quickly brought order out of chaos to his regiment. Noticed by the flamboyant cavalry chief, Jeb Stewart, Oakwood was promptly promoted to major.

By 1864, the third year of the war, people, who had an eye for talent and the ear of President Davis, whispered John Oakwood's name to him. Davis remembered Lorena Oakwood's flashing green eyes and John was soon promoted to the rank of brigadier general. In due time he became military attaché to Braxton Bragg, who had taken the place of Robert E. Lee as military advisor to the Confederate President. Late in the war he finally realized his dream of combat when he joined General Hood at the Battle of Atlanta.

Lorena Oakwood was a perfect general's wife. Besides being a delightful hostess to their wide circle of friends, she was charming, witty, well read, and knew many important people, including not a few men who would gladly change places with John Oakwood.

When John was ordered to the capitol,

Richmond, Lorena held court at the Spotswood Hotel where her eloquent voice and flaming red hair were only clues to a fiery temper and spirit that John Oakwood suppressed.

Her acquaintances and influence extended, through her large family, particularly her dearest friend and cousin, Mary Chestnut, to the highest offices of the South. It was whispered throughout Richmond that John Oakwood climbed to his military pinnacle, one foot on his wife's back and the other planted firmly on her cousin's.