

Gettysburg Battle Day 3 & the Morning of Day 4

3 July 1863

[Cannonading begins early in the morning before the sun is up. Maggie and Emily, and the soldiers who can walk retreat to the cellar. The household members near Middletown return to Pine Hill, where they can hear the cannons' roar from eight miles away and see a smoky haze above the town. The armies are fighting south of the town, but artillery could go astray and hit buildings and homes in Gettysburg. At Trostle farm field hospital, Eli and Carson are sent to the dead tent to search for family information carried on the dead men, so the army may inform their families.]

Shaken and with ringing ears, Maggie, Emily, and Lydia emerged from the cellar, followed by the usual pack of Confederate soldiers who had dropped by in search of cover. They were now used to the cycle of retreating to the cellar during cannonading and infantry attacks, coming upstairs, preparing food, and caring for the wounded. They no longer could conceive of life ever going back to normal, and fully expected to be back in the cellar some other time during the day.

But it didn't happen.

Captain Morrison and his team returned to the house around dusk. They seemed depressed and discouraged. The men did not talk but took whatever food Emily and Maggie could scrape together and went out to the front porch to eat. Morrison, meanwhile, sat at the kitchen table and ate silently. Maggie and Emily looked at each other and wondered if things had not gone well for the C.S.A.

"Will you be staying here for the night, Captain?" Emily ventured.

"No, Mrs. Johnson, I am afraid not. We have been ordered to build more barricades in case the Union tries to attack us here." He wiped his mouth on the napkin and placed it back on his lap. "However, I would be remiss if I did not thank you all for your kind hospitality over the last few days. You have shown exceptional grace under pressure."

Hearing something in the back yard, Lydia leaped to her feet and flew out the door like an angry dog. When she saw what was going on, she shouted, "You! Pull up your trousers and go do that somewhere else!"

"That's what they's all telling me. And anyways it's too late now."

With a hiss, Lydia stalked back inside. She was getting mighty tired of chasing men away from their yard. Aside from using it as an outdoor latrine, they seemed to have taken or damaged nearly everything else, with the exception of five or six chickens. Rubbing her tired eyes, she yawned and admitted to herself that she would adore collapsing onto a bed and sleeping for a few days.

"Do you anticipate leaving us, Captain?" Maggie asked. The idea of him departing made her afraid. Would another man, a less sympathetic one, come into her house? Who would protect them from the avaricious and the evil?

Captain Morrison finished his meal and stood up. "I cannot say, Mrs. Smith." He bowed graciously to all three. "But should we never see each other again, please remember me kindly. I know I shall remember you that way." With that he strode out of the kitchen and down the hall, his boots ringing with each step he took.

The women stood looking after him for a long time.

"Well," Emily finally said, "let's not worry."

"Or get too hopeful," the pragmatic Lydia added.

"No," Maggie murmured, "I think perhaps we *should* be hopeful. Otherwise, what is the use of all this?"

Lydia put an arm around her mother. "By all means then, Mama. Let us be hopeful."

4 July 1863

The C.S.A. troops left before dawn the next morning. In their place, Union troops triumphantly marched into town, with fife and drum corps playing and flags flying high. Maggie could scarcely believe she was hearing Union tunes. People out on the street were singing praises because the Johnnies were gone.

“Is it true?” Lydia called from the front porch. “Have the Rebs really retreated?”

The reply was a resounding, “Yes!”

As one, the three women raced to the annex bedroom, moved the bed, pulled back the rug, and lifted the trap door. Eight men in the gloom of the cellar blinked up at them.

Emily grinned. “Come on up! The Johnnies have left!”

A whoop rose from the men and in the next moment they were clambering up the stairs and into the bedroom.

“Never so glad to see a regular room in all my life!” one laughed.

Another grabbed Lydia and waltzed her around the room until he realized she was wearing trousers and hurriedly let go of her. The soldiers around them were laughing and slapping one another’s backs. Then they said their goodbyes and left to find their unit.

The women watched the soldiers go, Lydia said, “We never even got to find out their names.”

