

Women of the Civil War - 2016
Edited 12/13

(Allen enters and addresses conductor)

Allen: Harvey, I'm glad you and the Band are ready. Mrs. Dodworth has booked a lady by the name of Loreta or Lorena Velasquez (*he mispronounces her name*) to open our 1868 lecture series and I expect her to arrive any minute. Seems she's writing some sort of book about her experiences during the War Between the States, though I can't for the life of me see how anyone would be interested in reading about the cooking of meals or the rolling of bandages. But, Callie is adamant that this woman be given the opportunity to speak so... (*he shrugs and exchanges knowing glances with Harvey*) I understand she's from Louisiana, so let's welcome her with a good Southern tune, shall we? Nothing too inflammatory, mind. We don't want to set our New York City audience on edge. (*Harvey nods and they consider for a moment. Then Allen has an idea.*) Ah! Lorena!

CUE: LORENA

(Loreta Velasquez enters near the end of the piece dressed as if she has come from outdoors. She carries a satchel and a book or 2 and stands to the side of the Band, listening. After the applause, Allen notices Loreta and approaches her.)

Allen: Ah, Madam Velasquez?

Loreta: (*Steps forward and nods to him, correcting his pronunciation*): No, I am Loreta Velasquez.

Allen: Ah, pardon me Madam VELASQUEZ. (*He corrects himself carefully. She may help him by repeating her name. Be creative here. When he finally gets it right they go on*) Allow me to introduce myself. I am Allen Dodworth.

Loreta: A pleasure to meet you, Mr. Dodworth. (*She offers her hand, he takes it and bows slightly*) This certainly is a lovely hall you have here.

Allen: Thank you. I believe it is a perfect venue for your little presentation this evening.

Loreta: Little?! Mrs. Dodworth told me that you have a sold out this evening's presentation. Humph!

Allen: (not really paying attention) Excellent, excellent . . . Sold OUT! A full house?!

Loreta: At least **she** seems to have her business quite well in hand.

Allen (*gives her a sidelong look*): In actuality, Madam, this hall belongs to ME, although Mrs. Dodworth does help out with the accounts and such. I....

(Harvey clears his throat rather loudly, expecting that Allen will make the introductions)

Allen: I don't believe you've met my brother, Loreta Velasquez, Mr. Harvey B. Dodworth. He will be conducting the band that will accompany you this evening.

(Loreta offers her hand to Harvey who takes it, bows slightly and smiles at her.)

Loreta *(to Harvey)*: I heard your band playing as I was coming into the hall just now. A grand rendition of Lorena, Mr. Dodworth.

(Harvey accepts her compliment.)

Allen: I thought it might be a good opener for your talk.

Loreta: That will be lovely, I'm sure.

Allen: Why don't we go through your lecture to see where more music might be appropriate?

Loreta: Well, I had not planned on any musical interludes, Mr. Dodworth, . . . *(Allen is about to protest but she smiles at HARVEY and cuts Allen off)* but since your band plays so elegantly, a bit of music might be an uplifting addition to my presentation.

Allen *(clearly a bit irritated at being "disrespected")*: A wise choice, Madam.

(Loreta sets her satchel and books on a chair. She takes her notes from the satchel and scans them.)

Loreta: *(To both Dodworths, although clearly favoring Harvey)*: I will open my lecture with a little history of my life as it was before the War. *(Checks lecture notes)*

Allen: *(rolls eyes, winks at Harvey totally expecting the lecture to be on a "girly subject")* Always good to begin at the beginning, I say. Do I detect a bit of Spanish dialect in your voice? *(Clearly proud of his excellent ear for such things)*

Loreta: Yes, I was born in Havana, Cuba and lived in northern Mexico when I was a girl.

Allen: Ah... perhaps a Spanish tune would be appropriate to accompany this portion of your talk. Harvey, I think Pas Espanol would work nicely.

CUE: PAS ESPANOL

Loreta: I was 7 years old when my family sent me to New Orleans to live with my aunt so that I might have the benefit of a proper education. Just after my 14th birthday, I fell in love with my dear William, who was an officer in the United States Army. Much to my aunt's disapproval, we married that same year and spent our first years together living at military posts in Arkansas, Kansas and Louisiana. It was not an easy life. By the time I was 18 years old I had birthed—and buried—3 children. We were posted to St. Louis, Missouri when the War of Northern Aggression began.

Allen: Ahem...Madam Velasquez, since we are here in New York City...in the NORTH...perhaps it would be best for you to refer to that conflict as “The Civil War.”

Loreta: There was nothing “civil” about it, Mr. Dodworth. (*She glares at him slightly*)

Allen: (*Trying to smooth things over*)Yes, yes. True enough. (*He gestures for her to continue*)

Loreta: After much consideration, William resigned his commission in the Union Army and joined the Confederate States Army in February 1861. Inspired by my study of Joan of Arc, I was prepared to fight by his side but he refused to be reasonable on the subject and left me behind when he marched off with his Confederate comrades. (*pause*) He should have known better. (*She gives the audience a knowing glance and waits for the chuckle. Then she continues*) I dressed in one of William’s suits and went to Memphis, TN, where I hid my womanly shape beneath wire shields and braces, donned a man’s wig and false mustache and became Lieutenant H.T. Buford of the Confederate States of America.

Allen (*glancing appreciatively at her feminine form and the audacity of the entire idea*): You must be joking!

Loreta (*showing him how she did it*): No, sir, I am NOT. I developed a masculine gait, learned to smoked cigars, and perfected the ability to spit. (*She prepares to spit but Allen waves his hands to stop her.*) I went to Arkansas and in 4 days, raised a battalion that I named The Arkansas Greys— 236 true Confederate men. I took charge of them myself and delivered them into William’s hands at Pensecola just 2 short weeks later. (*She contemplates for a moment while this fact sinks into the audience, Allen and the Band*)

Allen (*disbelieving—speaks to her in a cajoling manner*): Well now, that’s quite a tale Madam Velasquez—or should that be Lieutenant?

Loreta (*she is not amused but takes his insult in stride*): You were, I believe, interested in assigning musical selections, Mr. Dodworth?

Allen: (*bemused*): Ah, yes. Of course.

Loreta: There is a song called “We’ll Go Down Ourselves”. Perhaps a verse or two of that might be appropriate at this point?

CUE: WE’LL GO DOWN OURSELVES (vocal)

Allen (*slightly mocking*): A mistress of disguise, a writer of books and a singer as well! You are a woman of many talents.

Loreta: (*ignoring his tone*) Thank you, sir. Some gentlemen are not as—ahem—open-minded as you.

Allen: (*still mocking her*): Oh, DO go on Madam Velasquez. Can we assume that your husband welcomed you and “your battalion” at Pensacola?

Loreta: Yes, he was most grateful. I volunteered to stay on as his aide but he insisted that I should return home to my wifely duties. Before I could convince him otherwise, my dear William was killed during a training exercise. I was devastated. (*She wipes a tear.*)

Allen (*in true sympathy for her loss*): The loss of a good man is always a tragedy, regardless of his politics. Perhaps a melody in William’s honor would be appropriate here. We have a heartfelt arrangement of Thou Art Gone from My Gaze. Shall I sing it for you? (*She nods, still unable to speak*)

CUE: THOU ART GONE FROM MY GAZE (tenor)

Loreta (*having regained her composure*): With my true identity as William’s wife revealed, I could no longer stay with the Arkansas Greys but I was determined that his death should not be in vain. I headed north to the front, resumed my manly appearance and joined General Longstreet’s brigade in Virginia where I experienced the glories and horrors of combat at the 1st Battle at Manassas.

Allen: Harvey was in command of the Regimental Band at Manassas! On the Union side, of course. (*Allen and Harvey exchanges disbelieving looks*)

Loreta: (*She speaks to Harvey*) A bloody affair for all concerned, sir. I’m glad we BOTH survived.

(*Harvey agrees*)

Loreta: After that horrific fight, I decided that my Confederate comrades would benefit from some effective intelligence gathering. So I “borrowed” a local farm-wife’s garments from her clothes line and, as Mrs. William Buford, made my way to Washington DC. I must admit that I did enjoy taking part in the social events of that city. I remember one evening in particular when Captain James of the New York 71st Regiment invited me to attend a charity ball for the benefit of the widows and orphans of the War.

Allen (*shocked*): Captain Ethan James?

Loreta: Why yes, I believe his given name WAS Ethan.

Allen (*turning to Harvey in astonishment*): He was in our regiment!!

Loreta: How interesting. (*Rubbing it in*) He was quite charming--and sincerely helpful to a lady who had lost her husband in the War. Not to mention an excellent dance partner.

Allen: (*beginning to lose his patience*): Ethan James, dancing with a Rebel spy?! Never!

Loreta: (*Clearly enjoying Allen's rising fury*) And later we joined the reception line where we were introduced to your President Lincoln. A gangly and unattractive man, I must say, but charming nonetheless. I did not exchange a great many words with Mr. Lincoln, but our brief interview induced me to believe that he was not a bad man, but an honest and well meaning one, who thought that he was only doing his duty in attempting to conquer the South.

Allen (*about to explode*): President Lincoln conversing with a **rebel spy**! Our audiences will NEVER endure such tales!

Loreta (*clearly enjoying Allen's fit*): Well, MRS. Dodworth found them quite fascinating. (*Turning to Harvey*) Does your band have the Prima Donna Waltz in its repertoire? I recall it was one of Captain James' favorite melodies and I would dearly love to hear it once again.

Harvey looks from Loreta to Allen (who is still trying to get control of his anger) then back to Loreta. He looks at the audience and shrugs. What's a gentleman to do? He turns to the Band and they play the waltz Loreta requested. Loreta may waltz a bit by herself as if remembering her evening. Harvey can't stand to see the lovely Loreta not dancing to her requested tune so he gestures to Allen to dance with her, Allen flatly refuses, so Harvey hands the baton off to Allen and motions him to conduct while he dances with Loreta. Allen, incensed, tries to cut off the band (to no avail) and eventually stalks off to pout. Harvey and Loreta dance for a short while then Harvey goes back to the band as he sees that no one is conducting.)

CUE: PRIMA DONNA WALTZ

Loreta: When I returned to New Orleans to deliver my findings, I was arrested on suspicion that I was a UNION spy! (*she chuckles broadly*) I've written an entire chapter for my book about how I slipped out of that predicament. I later rejoined the Arkansas Greys at the Battle of Shiloh and was wounded while helping to bury the dead. Unconscious, I was taken to the field hospital where the secret of my gender was discovered. Fortunately, the surgeon was also a woman.

Allen: (*Losing all patience!*) Now Madam Velasquez that CANNOT be true! No military officer in his right mind would allow a FEMALE doctor into his regiment—not even the REBELS would do such a thing!

Loreta (*getting a bit aggravated with Allen's attitude*): Not true, sir. Your Union General, Ulysses S. Grant, was so confident in Dr. Hettie Kersey Painter's medical skills that he gave her a document ordering all Union officers to give her whatever assistance she required.

Allen (*clearly exasperated*): So how is it that this female surgeon did not have you arrested for impersonating an officer?!

Loreta: Initially, she intended to do so but I convinced her to keep my secret until I was well enough to flee back to New Orleans. Once I fully recovered, I returned to Richmond to seek more information that would help my Confederate brothers. I was very discreet and quite successful. Why, I was even approached by some northern officials to hunt for a Confederate woman spy who kept slipping through their fingers. It turned out they were looking for ME!

Allen: So you were hired to capture—YOURSELF? How preposterous.

Loreta: I thought so too, Mr. Dodworth because by that time, you see, the War of Northern Aggre...

(Allen clears his throat loudly)

Loreta:.. the “Civil War” was over.

Allen: And I assume that put an end to your military career, as it were?

Loreta: Regretfully, yes.

Allen (*sarcastically*): Perhaps the Band could play a nice march at this point in your talk, Madam; in honor of your “soldiering”.

Loreta: Thank you Mr. Dodworth, I am glad you’re willing to honor the importance of my efforts.

Allen(*straining to maintain his composure*): Well, MRS. Dodworth would have my hide if I behaved otherwise. (*Barely able to remain civil*): Harvey, **pick a march to CLOSE** Madam Velasquez’ story. (*She begins to protest that this is not the end of her presentation but Allen takes her politely but firmly by the arm*) And now I think it’s time you and I BOTH have a chat with Mrs. Dodworth about your “presentation”. (*He leads her offstage*) Cally! Cally!!!

CUE: Washington Greys