

# Diary of Susie Valentine

April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1860

Dearest Diary,

I must be brief, for tonight is the grand ball at Colonel Hawkins' plantation. I shall dress myself in finery, like a wealthy Southern belle. In my elegant blue gown, no one will ever suspect that I'm on a mission to help my very first slave escape to freedom. My name is Susie Valentine, I'm 10 years old and I live in North Carolina with my father Charles and my mother Eliza. It was only a week ago, I had no idea what the future could bring. Anyway, my family had just arrived in a beautiful horse drawn carriage ready to dance until our shoes wear out. Colonel Hawkins was greeting everyone at the door of his luxurious estate. When we got inside everyone was dancing in the ballroom, I knew that I could never dance the Waltz as good as anyone else tonight. But there was one boy that I wouldn't mind dancing with, Colonel Hawkins' son James. Sure, he is rich and fancy and he may not be my type. But there's something about him that makes me fall head over heels for him every time I see him! But I must focus on what's important! I carefully slipped out of the ball and entered the rose garden,

where I planned to meet Colonel Hawkins' slave Alexander. But when I got to the rose garden he was nowhere to be seen. It was too dark outside to see anything. I whispered "Alexander, where are you?" Instead of finding him I was spooked by an owl. "You look like you could use some help." Someone calls from far away. I wish I had a lantern to see, I can hear footsteps behind me. I'm frightened at the thought of it being Colonel Hawkins, he absolutely hates it when people sneak around his house during his parties. Turns out it was just Alexander and he was carrying a lantern. "You look like you need some help, don't worry I know this property like the back of my hand." He said. I then hear another voice coming from inside the house, it's calling my name. It was my father's voice! I couldn't just leave Alexander here so we hatched a plan, he was going to run over to my house and hide in the turnip shed. Then tomorrow I'll take one of my family's horses and we'll travel up north to New York where Alexander can live free.

April 21<sup>st</sup>, 1860

It's a beautiful April morning, The sun is shining and the birds are singing. But there's no time to doddle, I have to get Alexander out of the turnip shed and on a horse before my parents find out. Bang! Crash! There was a ruckus going on downstairs, My gut was telling me that this wasn't a good sign! I ran downstairs to see what was going on. "Where is he?" Colonel Hawkins asked. "I really don't see why don't have to answer to an old man with a wooden walking stick." My father replied. "If you don't tell me, then this will become a wooden beating stick!" Colonel Hawkins yelled. Bang! He fired a warning shot at a beautiful vase on the dining room table. "Father, no!" I cry out. "Susie, hold your tongue!" Father yells. Colonel Hawkins walks over to me, kneels down and says "Young lady, from the day you were born, you were raised to lust after the approval of a man. And I know that you really want to be a good girl, and good girls are seen and not heard." My heart sunk deep into my chest as I replied with a soft "Yes, sir." I ran to the beautiful

Sarsaparilla tree on the hill as tears rolled down my cheeks. A few minutes later, I heard sounds coming once again from my house. It turns out that my mother knew my father very well for she had baked him a delicious payback pie. She ran in front of the turnip shed with one of father's guns and shouted. "Get off my property, Colonel Hawkins." As soon as I heard this I instantly rushed down to help my mother out. Colonel Hawkins was frightened but he pretended not to be. "You may have won this round Eliza Valentine. But this isn't over!" He left as I looked at mother with wonder knowing that I'll never think of her as an average woman ever again. "Quick!" She shouted. "Get on a horse and don't stop until you reach New York!" Soon we were riding off into the woods to hopefully reach New York without getting caught by soldiers.

April 30<sup>th</sup>, 1860

We finally reached New York! Alexander can finally live free without worrying about getting captured by the evil Colonel Hawkins! It was a rough ride, but it was worth it to make sure he's safe. We were almost caught by confederate soldiers along the way. He even risked his life to save me back in Virginia. I decided that I'm permanently moving to New York to stay with my Aunt Sally who's a teacher, and she was even able to teach Alexander how to read and write. Plus, there was nothing waiting for me back in North Carolina. Plus, Colonel Hawkins would kill me if I came back! Alexander is living with me and my aunt because he doesn't have any relatives living in the North. He's like a brother to me. A kind and loyal brother who cares about you with all of his heart. I also received a letter from my mother. She told me that while Colonel Hawkins is still looking for Alexander, he isn't aware that he's five states away! I feel confident and proud that I did something to help someone who was in need. It's something that every person and woman should have, a connection of kindness that only grows

between a friend or loved one. And that's the story of how a small 10 year old girl like me can do something big.