

behind rebel lines

"Suspense-filled."

—BOOKLIST

The Incredible Story of Emma Edmonds,
Civil War Spy



SEYMOUR REIT

1

April 25, 1861

*T*he long line stretched from the Flint courthouse down the stone steps and across the green lawn. Moving forward slowly, the young men were in high spirits. They laughed and joked as if they were leaving on a picnic instead of going off to fight a war.

"I'll wager we take Richmond in three weeks."

"Southerners talk big, but they cain't fight."

"Been plowin' behind horses all my life. Now I'll get me a chance to ride one."

"Can't hardly wait to take a shot at a live rebel."

"You may be too late, boy. They say one good battle, the Confederacy'll fall apart."

Tension and excitement crackled along the noisy line. But one dark-haired volunteer, small and silent, was lost in thought. Emma Edmonds tugged at her jacket and prayed—for the tenth time that day—that the scheme would work. It was plumb crazy, she knew, but she didn't care. She'd made up her mind and that was that.

Would they discover her secret? She'd have her answer in a few minutes. Of course, she was comfortable enough wearing men's clothes. She'd practically lived in rough pants and heavy shoes growing up in Canada, working with the farmhands, and keeping up with the best of them. Now at twenty-one, she was still trim and boyish. She had a strong chin, a firm mouth, and cool blue eyes, and she'd cropped her hair short like a man's.

She also knew—she'd checked earlier—that nobody bothered with physical examinations for new recruits. The Union army was desperate for able-bodied men; they had no mind to be choosy. Still she was worried. Maybe her information was wrong. Maybe they'd see right through her masquerade.

The line inched slowly along step by step, carrying Emma past a billboard covered with recruiting posters. The words leaped out at her: VOLUNTEERS TO THE RESCUE!...PATRIOTISM AND LOVE OF COUNTRY!...RUTHLESS SOUTHERN TREACHERY!...DEFEND OUR NOBLE UNION!...VINDICATE THE HONOR OF OUR GLORIOUS FLAG!

She frowned at the fancy wording—all that fuss and bombast. Still, she had to admit that was how she really felt—she and thousands of others. Bother the fancy speeches and flag-waving politicians—the fact was that alarm bells were ringing everywhere. The country was in peril and had to be saved.

Only ten days before, Abe Lincoln had asked for seventy-five thousand volunteers. Now they were pouring in from shops and factories, mills and mines, offices, farms, and dockyards—rallying in every city, town, and village. And so were the local militias, with their fancy names and uniforms. Emma had read in the papers about Ellsworth's Avengers, Smallwood's Marylanders, Sprague's Light Cavalry; she knew of the Black Rifles, the Winslow Blues, and the Hibernian

The true story of a Civil War spy who fooled the rebels—and her own troops!

In 1861, when war erupted between the states, President Lincoln made an impassioned plea for volunteers. Determined not to remain on the sidelines, Emma Edmonds cropped her hair, donned men's clothing, and enlisted in the Union Army. Everyone, even her fellow soldiers, thought she was a man.

But Emma wanted to do more. When she heard a key Union spy had been captured and executed, she volunteered to take his place. Soon she was a cunning master of disguise, risking discovery and death at every turn. Emma had fooled her own army, but could she keep her secret behind rebel lines?

"The story is fast-moving, and Emma's spunk... is evident."

—Kirkus Reviews

"This stranger-than-fiction story will captivate history buffs and hold the attention of the most reluctant reader."

—Bank Street College of Education

AN IRA TEACHERS' CHOICE

Cover photographs: (girl) by Roxann Arwen Mills/Photonica; (soldiers) © Corbis
Cover design by Claudine Guerguerian



GULLIVER BOOKS / HARCOURT, INC.

525 B Street, San Diego, CA 92101

15 East 26th Street, New York, NY 10010

www.harcourt.com

Printed in the United States of America

Ages 10 to 14

\$6.00 / Higher in Canada

ISBN 0-15-216427-8



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