

LUCY'S CAVE

A Story of Vicksburg, 1863

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Street after street was deserted. Stores were shut tight. A stray dog wandered through the rubble, sniffing.

"No one would recognize our city," Mama said.

A few Confederate soldiers, their gray uniforms in tatters, straggled toward them. "Something to eat, please," they begged.

Lucy feared for her two older brothers off fighting. *Were they begging for food, too?*

A horse and wagon clattered by. Inside sat Lucy's classmate Sallie and her family.

"We're leaving town," Sallie called.

"We're going to the caves," Lucy called back.



Shells burst through the air.

"Down!" Mama screamed.

Lucy crouched behind a tree stump. She could feel her heart thumping like a drum.

Boom!

The shells exploded.

As soon as they stopped, Lucy scrambled to her feet, gripping her valise.

"Lucy, run fast." Mama pointed toward the hills. "Over there."





Caves dug out by the townsmen blotted the hills and ridges, glaring at Lucy like many black eyes. She hurried after Mama.

Cannons roared, louder than before. "They're so close!" Lucy cried. "Mama!"

Mama grasped Lucy and pulled her forward. "Hurry, hurry."

Lucy stepped over tangled roots and rocks. Her arms ached. She dropped her valise, then thought of poor Higgity inside. She picked it up and trudged on.

"Keep going, Lucy," Mama called.

Lucy moved closer and closer, panting as she stumbled over the last rugged part. Could she make it?

The muscles in her legs throbbed. She caught her breath and spotted the entrance beneath a clump of vines. Voices cried, "In here! In here!" Hands reached out. They pulled her inside and grabbed her valise.

Inside the dark cave, Lucy heard babies squalling and people coughing. She wrinkled her nose at the strong smell of sweat.

Lucy blinked, trying to adjust to the dimness. Sheets hung all over, and candles glimmered. There were so many people! She saw men playing cards. One man whittled a piece of wood; another strummed a guitar. Women and their servants sat close to the candles, sewing. Small children ran past, almost knocking Lucy over.

