

Novel Interlude I
Finding Safety In Tennessee
for
“And Galileo Saw A Pendulum, While Sitting In A Church”
by Sara Kumar

On Sunday, October 12, 1862, Charles Johnson, the son of Andrew Johnson, who was thirty-two years old, wrote a letter to his father from Murfreesboro, Tennessee. He had reached Murfreesboro on Friday evening in the cold rain and had found no hotel to stay the night when he arrived there with his mother, Eliza, and his sister, Mary, who was younger in age by under two years. Also included in their party was Daniel Stover, Mary’s husband, and their three children. Charles wandered the town for more than one hour after finally finding a home to stay the night on the floor. ¹

The Emancipation Proclamation was yet to be signed. Neither had the speech been penned that Lincoln would give at Gettysburg. The Civil War would end in April of 1865, and not everyone in the North was wanting peace with the Confederacy in a way that meant all could vote, especially all Black Americans. Women would win the right to vote in the year 1919, with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment.

¹ Johnson, Andrew. “From Charles Johnson [Murfreesboro, October 12, 1862].” *The Papers of Andrew Johnson*, edited by Leroy P. Graf and Ralph W. Haskins, vol. 6, The University of Tennessee Press, 1983, p. 23 and Johnson, Andrew. Note 1 to “From Charles Johnson [Murfreesboro, October 12, 1862].” *The Papers of Andrew Johnson*, edited by Leroy P. Graf and Ralph W. Haskins, vol. 6, The University of Tennessee Press, 1983, p. 23

In October of 1862, Andrew Johnson was the Military Governor of Tennessee, appointed by Abraham Lincoln on March 3, 1862, to bring the occupied Southern state into Union hands. Murfreesboro was over thirty miles from Nashville, the capital city of Tennessee, where Andrew resided and worked to defend the State Capitol from rebel forces. Charles and the family had left Greeneville, Tennessee on Wednesday, and their journey would be prevented partly because of the message sent from Governor Isham Green Harris of the Confederacy threatening them that they would go down with the Union flag the morning after they arrived, but this would not be so. ²

Robert Johnson, the fourth-born child of Andrew and Eliza McCardle Johnson, was working to secure the Cumberland Gap in the Appalachian Mountains. He had marched with his Union regiment for eighteen days to reach Portland, Ohio on the fifteenth of October, three days after his older brother Charles had reached Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Robert wrote, “The people of East Tennessee are in a desperate condition- the country a waste and ruin, desolation and misery mark the steps of the ruthless invader-still the cry, do not hang and shoot traitors[.]” Robert was writing to his father about the need to punish captured Confederate soldiers by death, and this was something Abraham Lincoln really thought about also. ³

² Johnson, Andrew. Note 3 to “From Charles Johnson [Murfreesboro, October 12, 1862].” *The Papers of Andrew Johnson*, edited by Leroy P. Graf and Ralph W. Haskins, vol. 6, The University of Tennessee Press, 1983, p. 23

³ Johnson, Andrew. “From Robert Johnson [Camp Spears Near Portland Ohio / Octo’ 15th 1862.]” *The Papers of Andrew Johnson*, edited by Leroy P. Graf and Ralph W. Haskins, vol. 6, The University of Tennessee Press, 1983, p. 28-29

Abraham Lincoln was also sending Andrew Johnson telegrams from Washington, D.C. in the Fall of 1862, and what happened in the months to follow would send Andrew across the nation by foot and by railway. On October 21, 1862, Abraham Lincoln wrote a letter from the Executive Mansion to “Major General Grant, Governor Johnson, & all having military, naval, and civil authority under the United States within the State of Tennessee.”

President Lincoln proposed to both Major General Ulysses S. Grant and to Military Governor Johnson, “to have peace again upon the old terms under the constitution of the United States, to manifest such desire by elections of members to the Congress of the United States particularly, and perhaps a legislature, State officers, and a United States’ Senator, friendly to their object.” President Lincoln was advising the two men to think about the restoration of Tennessee into the United States, even before the elections to be held in November of 1864 for the President and Vice President of the United States. ⁴

It is very likely that Abraham Lincoln had both Ulysses S. Grant and Andrew Johnson in mind for the 1864 election campaign, and he wanted them to know that they would be well cared for in the Executive Mansion of the United States. Abraham continued his letter, “In all available ways give the people a chance to express their wishes at these elections. Follow law, and

⁴ Johnson, Andrew. “From Abraham Lincoln [Executive Mansion / Washington, Oct. 21., 1862.]” *The Papers of Andrew Johnson*, edited by Leroy P. Graf and Ralph W. Haskins, vol. 6, The University of Tennessee Press, 1983, p. 33-34

forms of law as far as convenient; but at all events get the expression of the largest number of the people possible. All see how such action will connect with, and affect the proclamation of Sept. 22nd. Of course the men elected should be gentlemen of character, willing to swear support to the constitution as of old, & known to be above reasonable suspicion of duplicity.” Abraham was being congruent with his stance taken in his First Inaugural Address as President given on March 4 of 1861, as he did not require the restored states in his mind to adopt a constitutional amendment regarding the eradication of slavery. ⁵

Abraham wrote that Andrew and Ulysses should follow the law as far as convenient. Abraham was also thinking about whether the Emancipation Proclamation that he wanted to sign into law on January 1, 1863 was a legal document. President Abraham Lincoln had issued a preliminary Emancipation Proclamation on September 22 of 1862, announcing that all slaves in territories of rebellion within the American continent would be freed on January 1 of 1863. Abraham wanted to gain confidence that the Union would be restored, and so he ordered these elections in Tennessee to place the nation on track for the Reconstruction effort following the end of the Civil War.

Tennessee was a place that would see much fighting over the next year. The Union victory at Fort Donelson, almost 125 miles north and west of

⁵ Johnson, Andrew. “From Abraham Lincoln [Executive Mansion / Washington, Oct. 21., 1862.]” *The Papers of Andrew Johnson*, edited by Leroy P. Graf and Ralph W. Haskins, vol. 6, The University of Tennessee Press, 1983, p. 34

Nashville, Tennessee was won by Ulysses S. Grant and his soldiers in February of 1862, and earned him the promotion to Major General. This victory at Fort Donelson enabled Union advances into Tennessee and Kentucky along the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers, and it enabled Military Governor Andrew Johnson to continue his leadership, where he was stationed in Nashville.

It is possible that Abraham wanted to enlist the help of Andrew to further his chances for success with his Emancipation Proclamation, and in his letter, Abraham inquired about how to connect with the people of Tennessee with regard to the forthcoming Proclamation. Andrew would take Abraham up on his offer in the New Year, and these steps would help Andrew come to the Vice President Chair of the Senate. The Senate Chambers was a place Andrew, a United States Senator from Tennessee, had worked before the war broke out. Abraham signed the letter at the end, “Yours vey Respectfully / A. Lincoln.” The President wrote, “vey,” which perhaps meant Abraham was thinking about Vevay, Indiana, a city where Mary Johnson Stover, Andrew’s daughter, and Eliza McCardle Johnson, Andrew’s wife, would stay over Christmas in 1862. ⁶

In the Appalachian Mountains, three states come together in the Cumberland Gap: Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia. The Gap in the mountains was vital during the Civil War, because it gave entry way into these

⁶ Johnson, Andrew. “From Abraham Lincoln [Executive Mansion / Washington, Oct. 21., 1862.]” *The Papers of Andrew Johnson*, edited by Leroy P. Graf and Ralph W. Haskins, vol. 6, The University of Tennessee Press, 1983, p. 34

states and to the East Tennessee Railroad. Both the Union and Confederate forces tried to maintain control of the Cumberland Gap from 1861 to 1863, and Andrew Johnson was very concerned on October 29, 1862 about the fate of this area of land. The Confederate Army had taken control of the Cumberland Gap in the late summer of 1861, and by June of 1862, Union Brigadier General George Washington Morgan had regained control with his division of 8,000 Union soldiers.

Brigadier General George Washington Morgan continued to hold the Cumberland Gap until late summer of 1862. In August of 1862, Confederate General Braxton Bragg moved his army into Chattanooga, Tennessee, and he planned a move into Kentucky with Confederate Lieutenant General Edmund Kirby Smith. On August 16, Brigadier General Morgan sent a small cavalry contingent and a contingent of infantry respectively to take a look at Roger's Gap in Kentucky and Big Creek Gap in Tennessee. The cavalry and infantry came upon the men of Confederate Colonel Carter Littlepage Stevenson, Jr., who were sent there to hold off Union soldiers from moving into Confederate held territory in Tennessee. The standoff continued for about a month in the Cumberland Gap, until Brigadier General Morgan's soldiers retreated under his command, and they reached Portland, Ohio on October 9, 1862.⁷

On October 29, 1862, Military Governor Johnson was worried about Brigadier General Morgan's retreat from the Cumberland Gap. Military

⁷ Johnson, Andrew. Note 1 "To Abraham Lincoln [Nashville Tenn Oct 29 1862 / By courier to Louisville]" *The Papers of Andrew Johnson*, edited by Leroy P. Graf and Ralph W. Haskins, vol. 6, The University of Tennessee Press, 1983, p. 44

Governor Johnson did not realize that this would prove to be a tactical victory for the Union cause and that Brigadier General Morgan's soldiers would have the opportunity to reorganize themselves. Andrew Johnson wrote to the President of the United States on October 29, 1862, "General Morgans entire command ought to be sent to Tennessee and if not all the Tennessee regts should be sent. They are the troops we need here[.]" Andrew was not certain that Tennessee would remain in Union hands, and he wanted to make a real effort to prevent the state from going to the Confederate cause.

Andrew continued his telegram to Abraham, "Let them come and will redeem East Tennessee before Christmas. East Tennessee must be redeemed. I have much to say upon this subject at the proper time [.] Let sufficient forces be sent to Nashville, it must and can be held. I will communicate fully all that has transpired as soon as mail facilities are restored [.]" Andrew would have more to say to Abraham over the next two months, as they prepared for the eventual ending of slavery, in parts of the Confederate held Southern Territory. ⁸

Abraham Lincoln was a member of the United States House Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads in December of 1847, when Washington Blevins, a citizen of Tennessee, penned a petition to Andrew Johnson regarding a mail route from Taylorsville to Papersville, Tennessee. Andrew Johnson also served in the United States House of Representatives that year,

⁸ Johnson, Andrew. "To Abraham Lincoln [Nashville Tenn Oct 29 1862 / By courier to Louisville]" *The Papers of Andrew Johnson*, edited by Leroy P. Graf and Ralph W. Haskins, vol. 6, The University of Tennessee Press, 1983, p. 44

and he served five two-year terms as the representative from the first district of Tennessee. During that time, Andrew was known to be against the expansion of the railroad, and he also worked to pass the Homestead Act for poor white laborers. Andrew introduced the bill in the House of Representatives after he was elected to the United States House of Representatives in 1843, and he helped bring the new bill through the House of Representatives and the Senate with success in May of 1862, after departing the Senate for Nashville, Tennessee. ⁹

Abraham and Andrew both came from poor families, and they were both born in log cabins. Andrew was the son of a porter at an inn in Raleigh, North Carolina. The porter's name was Jacob Johnson, and he died as a result of a boating accident when Andrew was only three years old. Jacob saved two men whose boat had capsized while fishing in Walnut Creek, a village in Wayne County, North Carolina. Unfortunately, Jacob died shortly thereafter, while ringing a funeral bell at a Presbyterian church. Andrew's mother was Mary, also known as Polly, and she worked as a weaver and as a clothing washer at Casso's Inn, which was run by a Revolutionary War soldier. Mary remarried in 1812 to a man named Turner Daugherty, and together they apprenticed young Andrew and his older brother William to a tailor named James J. Selby when Andrew was only ten years old. The boy who would be President was apprenticed to serve until the age of twenty-one, but this would not be.

⁹ Lincoln, Abraham. "Petition of Washington Blevins and others to Andrew Johnson [1847-12-07]." /documents/D272533. *The Papers of Abraham Lincoln Digital Library*

On the last day of October in 1862, Abraham sent Andrew a telegram from Washington City D.C. Abraham wrote, “Yours of the 29th received. I shall take it to Gen. Halleck; but I already know it will be very inconvenient to take Gen. Morgan’s command from where it is now. I am glad to hear you speak hopefully for Tennessee[.]” General George Washington Morgan was a Union general, but there was also a Confederate Captain named John Hunt Morgan, who eventually died in Greeneville, Tennessee in September of 1864, and who was known for his detrimental raids to Union cities in Indiana and Ohio.

Ulysses S. Grant would not take command of the Union Army of the Potomac until March of 1864. General Ulysses S. Grant did not fight at the Battle of Antietam, which began and ended on one day in September of 1862. Though Abraham claimed this day as a Union victory, as the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia would not advance further north, what happened on September 17, 1862 became the deadliest one-day battle in American military history.¹⁰

General George Brinton McClellan was in command for the Union Army of the Potomac at the Battle of Antietam. He was relieved of his command of this army in March of 1862 for failing to take action and for hesitating to invade Virginia. General McClellan and the Army of the Potomac suffered many casualties despite having uncovered a battle plan of General Robert Edward Lee and despite outnumbering the Confederate forces nearly two to

¹⁰ Johnson, Andrew. “From Abraham Lincoln [Washington City D.C. / Oct. 31. 1862].” *The Papers of Andrew Johnson*, edited by Leroy P. Graf and Ralph W. Haskins, vol. 6, The University of Tennessee Press, 1983, p. 45

one. Abraham needed a Union general to end the war on October 31 of 1862, when he wrote the telegram to Andrew. General Henry Wager Halleck was on Abraham's mind, and he would appoint Halleck to General-In-Chief of the Union Armies in July of that year.

Abraham concluded, in October of 1862, in his telegram to Andrew, "David Nelson' son of the M.C. of your state, regrets his father's final defection, and asks me for a situation- Do you know him? Could he be of service to you, or to Tennessee, in any capacity in which I could send him?" Abraham also had another man on his mind when he wrote this telegram to Andrew. That was Brigadier General William "Bull" Nelson, who commanded the Army of Kentucky on the Union side at the Battle of Richmond in August of 1862. This battle was a great loss to the Union. Brigadier General Nelson barely escaped, and many of his over six thousand soldiers were captured. Abraham, in the telegram, remembers the situation following the Battle of Richmond when Brigadier General Nelson was killed by Brigadier General Jefferson Columbus Davis of the Union Army, and not the Confederate President. Brigadier General Nelson was killed in Louisville, Kentucky, just over one hundred miles from the site of the battle. Davis was unhappy with Nelson's performance, and Nelson was known to be a braggart and somewhat brusque to those who opposed him. This incident happened on September 29, 1862, and Abraham was needing a critical Union victory, in order to issue the Emancipation Proclamation. ¹¹

¹¹ Johnson, Andrew. "From Abraham Lincoln [Washington City D.C. / Oct. 31. 1862]." *The Papers of Andrew Johnson*, edited by Leroy P. Graf and Ralph W. Haskins, vol. 6, The University of Tennessee Press, 1983, p. 45

After receiving the telegram from Abraham, Andrew waited several days before responding to the President about military appointments. Military Governor Andrew Johnson wrote to President Lincoln from Nashville, Tennessee on November 8, 1862, “There are many things that I will advise you of in a short time. Since my location here we have had numerous Commanders placed at this post[.] some of them have been tolerable others intolerable but the one now in command Genl Negley who was left here by Genl Buell in his disgraceful retreat from Alabama & Tennessee has done us more harm than all others & is wholly unfit for the place[.]” Andrew wanted to help Abraham end the war in Tennessee and bring the state to Union control. Tennessee was a Southern state that seceded from the Union in June of 1861. East Tennessee, where Andrew Johnson resided, was holding more firm for the Union. There, many poor White laborers worked, like Andrew, who had his start as a tailor in Greeneville, Tennessee after escaping from Selby’s apprenticeship, with his brother, William, in June of 1824.¹²

In his letter on November 8, 1862 to Abraham, Andrew wrote about his successful initiation of the 5th Regiment Tennessee Volunteer Calvary. Andrew placed Colonel William Brickly Stokes at the head of volunteer calvary regiment. Stokes served as a member of the United States House of Representatives from the 4th District of Tennessee up until March of 1861,

¹² Johnson, Andrew. “To Abraham Lincoln [Nashville Tennessee November 8th 1862].” *The Papers of Andrew Johnson*, edited by Leroy P. Graf and Ralph W. Haskins, vol. 6, The University of Tennessee Press, 1983, p. 49

and he, like Andrew owned several slaves in Tennessee, probably between seven to nine enslaved people.¹³

Five days after Andrew sent this letter to Abraham, Andrew telegraphed United States Secretary of War Edwin McMasters Stanton, in the hopes that Stokes could be placed in federal service with the Union Army, and conveying that Stokes' regiment had eight regiments complete for engagement with the Confederate forces in Tennessee. Stanton did not enlist Stokes into federal military service, and instead, Stokes remained at the command of the 5th Regiment Tennessee Volunteer Calvary, until he resigned in March of 1865. When Andrew was writing, even the city of Nashville, where he was stationed, was in danger of falling to the Confederate soldiers.¹⁴

On November 14, 1862, Andrew sent a telegram to his middle son, Robert, in Cincinnati, telling him that Eliza, Mary, and Mary's family had arrived in Nashville. Andrew's wife, Eliza, suffered from the illness of tuberculosis, which she contracted shortly after the birth of her last son, Andrew Junior, or Frank, who was born in 1852. This illness of Eliza greatly limited her physical activity, and she was often unable to travel from Greeneville, Tennessee, where she lived with Mary and her house workers,

¹³ Johnson, Andrew. "To Abraham Lincoln [Nashville Tennessee November 8th 1862]." *The Papers of Andrew Johnson*, edited by Leroy P. Graf and Ralph W. Haskins, vol. 6, The University of Tennessee Press, 1983, p. 49

¹⁴ Johnson, Andrew. Note 3 to "To Abraham Lincoln [Nashville Tennessee November 8th 1862]." *The Papers of Andrew Johnson*, edited by Leroy P. Graf and Ralph W. Haskins, vol. 6, The University of Tennessee Press, 1983, p. 49

including the enslaved woman named Dolly, who would find freedom by August of 1863.¹⁵

Charles and Eliza had wanted to make it through from Nashville to Cincinnati in a shorter amount of time, but they were caught in guerrilla fighting in Tennessee, and the roads were not secure for passing through to Ohio to meet up with Robert. Robert joined the Union Army at Camp Dennison near Cincinnati and helped organize the 4th Tennessee Volunteer Regiment. He served in the Tennessee State Legislature for the 1859 to 1861 term, and Robert was known, like his father, to enjoy giving speeches. Andrew wrote, “Charles has an opportunity to act here as Surgeon if he will.” Charles was serving at the time as the assistant surgeon of the 10th Regiment Tennessee Volunteer Infantry, and it was likely that Andrew had in mind for Charles to become involved in the federal government at some time in the future. Andrew ended his telegram to his son, Robert, saying, “You ought to be careful to get good horses. Cavalry horses soon break down unless they are durable.” Riding horses required dexterity, but both Robert and Charles had a problem with alcoholism, and this was a concern for their father.¹⁶

Robert was in the habit of boasting about his achievements, and when he arrived at Camp Spears near Portland, Ohio, earlier in October, he wrote to

¹⁵ Johnson, Andrew. “To Robert Johnson [Nashville, Nov’r 14th 1862].” *The Papers of Andrew Johnson*, edited by Leroy P. Graf and Ralph W. Haskins, vol. 6, The University of Tennessee Press, 1983, p. 52

¹⁶ Johnson, Andrew. “To Robert Johnson [Nashville, Nov’r 14th 1862].” *The Papers of Andrew Johnson*, edited by Leroy P. Graf and Ralph W. Haskins, vol. 6, The University of Tennessee Press, 1983, p. 52 and Johnson, Andrew. Notes 1 and 2 to “To Robert Johnson [Nashville, Nov’r 14th 1862].” *The Papers of Andrew Johnson*, edited by Leroy P. Graf and Ralph W. Haskins, vol. 6, The University of Tennessee Press, 1983, p. 52

his father, “I have the proud satisfaction of knowing that I, now, although in the State of Ohio, hundreds of miles from home, have the best and largest Regiment in this Division of the Army- the men, without exception, love and respect me, and will follow wherever I lead, and will have no other commander, and what I say for them to do-they will do, with cheerfulness, but will not submit to any other officer, which being the case, it is almost impossible for me to leave the Regiment, for even an hour, and I therefore make it my duty to be always with the Reg’t[.]” Robert was happy to be in Ohio, far enough away from Virginia or Kentucky, where the fighting was grueling. Robert asked his father in mid-October not to be sent to North Western Virginia, and he expressed the desire to arm his men and equip them with calvary. ¹⁷

On November 18, 1862, ten days after sending the telegram to President Lincoln, regarding military operations in Tennessee, Military Governor Johnson sent another telegram to the President. Andrew wrote, “I wish we were clear of the whole ‘Carter Concern.’ I feel in strong hopes that things will go well in a few days as we have a man at the head of this army who will fight. I some time ago advised you that Buell would never redeem East Tenn. & stated substantially what he has since proved himself to be.” Brigadier General Samuel Perry “Powhatan” Carter commanded the 24th Brigade in Brigadier General George Washington Morgan’s 7th Division of the Union Army. Samuel was assigned to capture the Cumberland Gap, and after

¹⁷ Johnson, Andrew. “From Robert Johnson [Camp Spears Near Portland Ohio / Octo’ 15th, 1862.]” *The Papers of Andrew Johnson*, edited by Leroy P. Graf and Ralph W. Haskins, vol. 6, The University of Tennessee Press, 1983, p. 29

a very brutal campaign, he helped secure the Gap to the Union side on June 18, 1862. Samuel and his brigade were besieged several months later and had to flee some two hundred miles through eastern Kentucky to escape Confederate capture, as did George's other soldiers. Andrew was still weary about leaving the Cumberland Gap unmanned, and he wanted to find a General-In-Chief who secure the state of Tennessee and win the war for the Union.¹⁸

Don Carlos Buell was appointed Union Brigadier General in May of 1861, and he suggested that Union forces move along the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers to bring back Nashville under Union control. This plan was eventually adopted after opposition from the President and from General George Brinton McClellan, and it helped General Ulysses S. Grant capture Fort Henry and Fort Donelson in Tennessee. In March of 1862, Don Carlos was promoted to Major General of Volunteers for the Union Army, and he began to move with four of his divisions to Chattanooga, Tennessee. Captain John Hunt Morgan cut off Union supply lines, and he prevented Brigadier General Don Carlos Buell from advancing. Chattanooga would not be won back by Union soldiers until November of 1863.

Captain John Hunt Morgan would be promoted by Confederate President Jefferson Finis Davis to the position of Brigadier General in December of 1862. Brigadier General Don Carlos moved into Kentucky, and he chose to stay put there and fight in Perryville, Kentucky on October 8,

¹⁸ Johnson, Andrew. "To Abraham Lincoln [Nashville Tenn. Nov 18. 1862]." *The Papers of Andrew Johnson*, edited by Leroy P. Graf and Ralph W. Haskins, vol. 6, The University of Tennessee Press, 1983, p. 64

1862, but the battle was inconclusive, and Don Carlos failed to go after the retreating Confederate soldiers. For this lack of follow-through, President Lincoln relieved Don Carlos from his command in Tennessee and replaced him on October 24, 1862 with Major General William Starke Rosecrans.

In Washington, D.C., people's thoughts were also on the election to be held in November of 1864, and President Abraham Lincoln would make a move to the middle with his support of Military Governor Andrew Johnson as Vice President of the United States.¹⁹

¹⁹ Johnson, Andrew. Note 3 to "To Abraham Lincoln [Nashville Tenn. Nov 18. 1862]." *The Papers of Andrew Johnson*, edited by Leroy P. Graf and Ralph W. Haskins, vol. 6, The University of Tennessee Press, 1983, p. 64