

**Synopsis and Background of *The Covert Buccaneer* (working title), copyright 2024
by S. Lucia Kanter St. Amour (expected release: fall 2025)**

Based on actual characters, events and primary source material: a current-day, divorced, special needs mother and attorney in San Francisco discovers a fragile, yellowed 100+ year old family manuscript. As she reads intimate details of her great-great-grandmother's history, an urgent purpose—connecting past and present—comes into focus. It is a suspenseful, gorgeously woven generational tapestry with political, social and global threads: two women protagonists book-ending the Anthropocene and its long term intersection with climate, women's rights, and indigenous groups. *The Covert Buccaneer* (with nary an AI-generated word) is rich, layered, funny, sexy, relevant, and **true**.

Synopsis: Georgina Ellis Benvenuto (“Ellie”), raised in a small town outside Chicago, is a current-day divorced mother of two toddlers, one with special needs requiring a team of fourteen interventionists. Although a polyglot and trained attorney in San Francisco, the atypical demands of her children allow her to take on only part-time work as an adjunct law professor and a contract attorney representing migrant laborers and asylum cases for women fleeing unstable situations (e.g. where climate crises has disproportionately impacted their ability to produce food for their communities, forcing them into sex-trafficking). Upon the death of her paternal grandfather, while helping her father clear out her grandparents home, she comes across a box housing old letters, photographs, artifacts, and a delicate, yellowed unpublished manuscript authored by her great-great-grandmother, Theodora (“Teddy”) Ellis (1848-1923), written in 1919 in San Francisco, the year the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution granted women the right to vote. Having not heard of Theodora, Ellie discovers that her great-great-grandmother (and namesake), although invisible to history (and her own family), was a pioneer on the American frontier, the first woman bookkeeper in Chicago in 1868, a miner, suffragist, real estate mogul, ally of Native American women, and had spent years disguised as a man accompanying her great-great-grandfather to San Francisco in exploits following the Great Chicago Fire of 1871.

Think Industrial Revolution, sea captaining, traversing the country via bull train on the pre-transcontinental railroad frontier, gambling shoot-outs in saloons, vigilantes, and negotiating land deals with “Indian” chiefs. Think gold mining, whisky smuggling, early Wells Fargo finance, a San Francisco fortune-teller, discovering a mammoth tooth while prospecting in the Klondikes, the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire, and the 1918 influenza pandemic.

In short, Teddy had been a covert buccaneer: a spirited, restless soul born in the wrong time and place (or just the right time and place, depending on perspective). Though Teddy eventually “stays put” to raise children while husband George continues prospecting in Mexico and Alaska (and encountering, as he put it, “much trouble with the Indians”), she finds leverages her previous life of disguise to infiltrate men's spaces, and to strategize women's rights, alongside a Native American counterpart.

As Ellie finds respite from her precariously teetering daily life by devouring the words put to paper by her ancestor (from the same two cities as herself, and walking past the very address where the words were typed at the corner of Fillmore and Chestnut Streets), she is awed by Teddy, and how instrumental the industrial revolution was to the precipitous advancement of rights she has enjoyed her entire 37 years without question. Ellie, who had considered her promising legal career thwarted, realizes how important the unsung work is that she's performing now — and even glimpses a new chance at love on her own

non-traditional terms. As she becomes increasingly aware of how the current climate crises and depletion of abundant energy celebrated during the Anthropocene intersects with women's rights, placing them again in peril, she gains a new understanding of what must be done. Better yet, she realizes she has already begun doing it . . . and discovers a shocking personal connection with her great-great-grandmother, as if Teddy was reaching through a century to anoint Ellie with a sacred, ancestral gift.

It is the story of so many women who went unnoticed during their time, and why their stories matter to us now.

Background: While remastering the 1919 unpublished manuscript of her great-great-grandfather, author S. Lucia Kanter St. Amour noticed the paucity of women in his otherwise Dumas-hewn life and adventures. His story is nothing short of spectacular. And he was also a (White) man operating in a (White) man's world. Tracking whenever a woman (or non-White) was mentioned in his mess of an otherwise thrilling sheaf, she noted what a limited lens his story represented, notwithstanding the stunning details. Based on breadcrumbs he drops of women characters in particular, she researched them and their own rich, careening back-stories - not to mention that of her transcendent great-great-grandmother (whose name and biography is not even mentioned in the manuscript, but is known through other means). Given that he wrote the manuscript the same year women in the U.S. gained the right to vote, and given that his exploits took place during the industrial revolution - the single most significant contributor to the precipitous advancement of women's participation in education, economics, and society in all of human history - and given the present-day correlation of women's rights deteriorating along with climate crises and the depletion of the cheap and abundant energy sources that have made them possible - - Lucia understood an imperative to bring to the surface the untold stories of these women (through the lens of her great-great-grandmother) on the American Frontier, and ending up in San Francisco where Lucia, an attorney, UN Women Vice President, law professor, and special needs mother and advocate, has called home her entire adult life.

Women and other historically marginalized groups today are well served in understanding where we've been to fully understand where we are now, and what is necessary to move forward. Although a work of fiction to entertain a modern audience (dotted with humor and steamy passages), **the story is real.**

