

**Synopsis and Background of *The Covert Buccaneer* (working title), copyright 2024 by S. Lucia Kanter St. Amour (estimated release: fall 2025/winter 2026)**

Based on actual characters and events: a current-day woman, mother, and professional in San Francisco discovers a 100+ year old family diary. As she reads intimate details of her family history, a newly defined meaning and purpose come into focus. It is a suspenseful, carefully woven and storied generational tapestry with political, social and global threads - past and present, two women protagonists book-ending the Anthropocene and its long term impact on the intersection of climate, women's rights, and indigenous groups. *The Covert Buccaneer* is rich, layered, funny, sexy, relevant, and true.

Co-protagonist, Georgina Ellis Benvenuto ("Ellie"), born and raised as a girl in small town outside Chicago, is a current-day divorced mother of two toddlers, one with severe special needs requiring a team of fourteen interventionists to help him make progress. Although a polyglot and trained attorney in San Francisco, due to the atypical demands of her children, she is only able to take on flexible work as an attorney representing climate migrant families, undocumented laborers, and asylum cases for women fleeing unstable situations in their home countries. Upon the death of her paternal grandfather, while helping her father clear out her grandparents home in Berkeley, CA, she comes across a box housing old letters, photographs, various artifacts, and an aged leather diary authored by her great-great-grandmother, Theodora ("Teddy") Ellis (1854-1919), ending in 1919 in San Francisco, the year U.S. Congress passed the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, granting women the right to vote. She had never heard any stories of Theodora, and discovers that her great-great-grandmother (and namesake), although invisible to history (and, evidently, her own family), was a pioneer on the American Frontier, the first woman bookkeeper in Chicago, a miner, suffragist, real estate mogul, ally of Native Americans, and had spent a number of years disguised as a man accompanying her great-great-grandfather in his exploits as they traveled together from Chicago to San Francisco.

Think industrial revolution. Think sea voyages, cattle driving, traversing the country via bull train, the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, gambling shoot-outs in saloons, vigilantes, and negotiating land deals with "Indian" (ahem, Native American) chiefs. Think Buffalo Bill Cody, gold and quartz mining, whisky smuggling, early Wells Fargo banking, a brand new Palace Hotel in 1875, a San Francisco fortune-teller, discovering a mammoth tooth while prospecting in the Klondikes, and the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906.

In short, Ellie's great-great-grandmother, Teddy, had been a covert buccaneer — a spirited and restless soul born in the wrong time and place (or just the right time and place, depending on your perspective). Although Teddy eventually "stays put" in San Francisco to raise her children while her husband George continues prospecting in Mexico and the Klondikes (and encountering, as he put it, "much trouble with the Indians"), she finds meaningful pursuits alongside her Miwok best friend; and use for her

previous life of disguise to infiltrate men's spaces and strategize for the women's rights movement.

As Ellie reads the words put to paper by her ancestor (from the same two cities as herself, and walking past the corner of Fillmore and Chestnut Streets where the final words of the journal were written), she is awed by her contributions, and how instrumental the industrial revolution was to the precipitous advancement of women's rights she has enjoyed her entire 35 years of life without question. Ellie, who previously had felt her promising legal career and job at a prestigious San Francisco law firm had been thwarted, gains a new understanding of what work must be done at the intersection of climate and women's rights. Even better, she realizes she has already begun doing it.

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

### **What led to this project?**

Recently, while remastering the 100+ year-old unpublished manuscript of her great-great-grandfather, author S. Lucia Kanter St. Amour noticed the paucity of women in the otherwise Dumas-hewn life and adventures of her ancestor. His story is nothing short of spectacular. And he was also a (White) man operating in a (White) man's world. Keeping track of whenever a woman (or non-White) was mentioned in his mess of an otherwise thrilling and suspenseful memoir, she realized what a limited lens her great-great-grandfather's story represented, notwithstanding the stunning detail of the prose. Based on the few breadcrumbs he drops in the manuscript of women characters in particular, she managed to learn more about them and their own rich, careening back-stories - including 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 in 1919, 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 today are well served by understanding where we've been to fully understand where we are now, and what is necessary to move forward. This is that story. Although a work of fiction so as to entertain an audience (complete with humor and a couple steamy sex scenes), **the story is true.**

