



## The Rose and the Lion

**Charles J. Musser**

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*The Rose and the Lion is a compelling historical novel about a slave who fought alongside the British in exchange for freedom.*

Charles J. Musser's compelling historical novel *The Rose and the Lion* follows young slaves on their journey to freedom.

Richard Pierpoint is ripped from his home in Africa as a young boy and is transported across the sea to the American colonies. While he's treated better than most, Richard is still a slave. He desires freedom for himself and for his love, Shenandoah.

Then rumors spread that a British officer is granting freedom to any slave who joins the British. With his future with Shenandoah as his sole concern, Richard enlists with a British guerilla unit, working toward emancipation. The novel focuses on the challenges he faces, as well as on his steadfast determination when it comes to fighting for freedom.

Richard Pierpoint was a real person who gained freedom by fighting against the American revolutionaries, but beyond a smattering of concrete facts, most of his life is shrouded in mystery. This narrative takes liberties to tell his tale, grounding them in realistic details, including era-appropriate language (extending to racial slurs), geographical reference points, and glimpses of historical events that occur in tandem with Richard's life.

Richard and Shenandoah's love shares the spotlight, and their affection is evident in the care with which they speak to each other. Both are strong and capable in their own rights, and their bond is solidified through clear examples of their connection and dedication to each other. Shenandoah bucks convention to assume an equal leadership role with her partner as they both seek to escape their enslavement with a minimum of bloodshed. Their interactions with others—as when Richard refuses to kill someone without trying diplomacy first, when he pretends weakness to avoid the ire of slaveholders, and when he assumes powerful tones to lead—are dynamic.

Though Richard's story is steady and tense, it also includes tender and reflective moments. Its prose is flowery and full of constant reminders of its characters' humanity and needs to connect. Atmospheric details, as of a sudden fire that results in ash raining down on Richard and his allies, and of smoke from musket fire stinging Richard's eyes during a protracted battle, result in sensory connections.

As Richard overcomes failures and celebrates victories, reminders that his greatness lies in his love for others make the story a pleasure. *The Rose and the Lion* is a compelling historical novel about a slave who fought alongside the British in exchange for freedom.

JOHN M. MURRAY (October 12, 2020)

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