

**VIVIA
THOMAS**
1840-1870



**FATEFUL
VENGEANCE**

True love is sweet, but “till death do us part” is easier said than survived. Such is the case of a beautiful girl and her young lieutenant in post-Civil War America. Vivia Thomas was born into Boston wealth in 1840. She was expected to find a husband by attending the various Boston society balls.

Soon she fell in love with a cavalry officer. After a suitably supervised courtship, their engagement was announced at a ball in their honor. But shortly before the wedding, the lieutenant disappeared. In a note left behind, he wrote that he was not ready for marriage and was rejoining his unit. He thought it was unfair to expect her to join him on the frontier.

Brokenhearted and revengeful, she headed west in search of her true love. When she learned he was stationed at Fort Gibson, Indian Territory, she began her long journey there. The trip was extremely difficult, but Vivia’s vengeful heart pushed her onward. She disguised herself by cutting her hair short and wearing men’s attire.

When she arrived in the Cherokee Nation, she joined the Army – becoming the first woman in history to do so. Private “Thomas” spent months as a soldier, closely watching her former lover. Vivia observed that he left the Fort nightly to have a romantic rendezvous with an Indian maiden. She decided to follow him discretely.

On a chilly night in late December 1869, Vivia hid behind a large rock on the trail where it crossed a small stream. She finally heard the galloping of his horse as he crossed the stream. Without saying a word, she shot him in the chest with her rifle. Leaving his body on the frozen ground, she returned to the Fort and cried herself to sleep.

When his body was discovered the next morning, it was assumed he had been killed by Natives. He was quietly buried at the Fort cemetery and soon forgotten. At first Vivia was happy for her revenge. But as days passed, she became remorseful over killing the only man she ever loved. She began sneaking out every night – to cry over his grave.

Soon Vivia contracted pneumonia from the cold nights. Burdened with guilt, she confessed everything to a Fort chaplain, knowing he was duty-bound to keep her secret. On January 7th, a weak Vivia collapsed over the grave. As dawn broke, a patrolling guard reported to the commander that “Thomas” had frozen to death.

When the commanding officer and his staff discovered “Thomas” was a woman, they were shocked. Then the chaplain told them her confession from several nights before. “I am a woman and I killed the man who jilted me.” They admired her bravery for crossing the country alone, and didn’t like her fiancé’s attachments with the Indians anyway.

They buried her in the prestigious officers’ Circle of Honor at Fort Gibson National Cemetery, which was reserved for soldiers who distinguished themselves in service. Her stone simply reads, “Vivia Thomas, January 7, 1870.”