

A real-life hospital drama

BY ALICE CARY

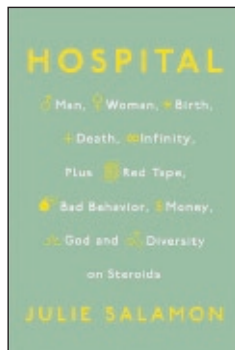
In journalist Julie Salamon's *Hospital: Man, Woman, Birth, Death, Infinity, Plus Red Tape, Bad Behavior, Money, God, and Diversity on Steroids*, you won't find interns and residents incessantly worrying over their love lives while treating patients suffering from horrific accidents and outrageously unbelievable situations. Instead, you'll find real-life, day-to-day drama, big and small, with a huge staff (6,210) of doctors, nurses, administrators and others playing their parts.

The hospital in question is Maimonides Medical Center in Borough Park, Brooklyn, a major hospital that for many years served a neighborhood of Orthodox and Hasidic Jews. More recently, however, the area has become increasingly multicultural, with no less than 67 languages spoken by the hospital's staff and patients. This proved irresistible to Salamon (*The Devil's Candy*, *The Christmas Tree*), who spent a year at Maimonides, talking to everyone, seemingly, who passed through. Her thorough and thoughtful research pays off in the broad, yet detailed strokes she paints of the complex relationships, financial constraints, and medical mysteries and miracles inside.

Salamon guides us through a broad cast of characters in an organized way, beginning with a helpful list of them all. She paints well-rounded portraits of everyone, including, for example, Mr. Zen, an illegal immigrant with cancer who doesn't want to leave the hospital because he has nowhere else to go. We meet a first-year, surf-loving resident named David, a Nebraskan full of wonder, and, of course, exhaustion. And there is hospital president and CEO Pam Brier, who just before taking over the reins was in a car accident that almost killed her and her husband. Her recovery and drive alone would be enough material for a book.

Hospital starts with the top executives and extends out into Borough Park, showing how the Maimonides staff strives to reach out to the community. Salamon knows how to weave a story well, and here she weaves many stories with drama and grace. ♥

Alice Cary writes from Groton, Massachusetts.



Hospital

By Julie Salamon

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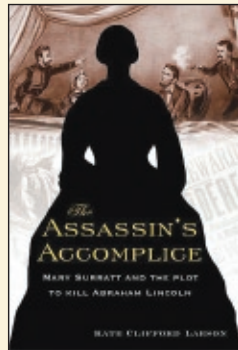
HISTORY

Mother of the Confederacy

Very few people know the name Mary Surratt today, but in 1865, she was one of the most hated women in the United States—unless you were a staunch Confederate. Surratt ran the boarding house where the conspirators, including John Wilkes Booth and her own son, met to plan the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln. In *The Assassin's Accomplice* (Basic, \$26, 288 pages, ISBN 9780465038152), historian Kate Clifford Larson paints a vivid picture of Civil War Washington, D.C., and Maryland with its Confederate spies and sympathizers. Through an extensive search of records, court transcripts and memoirs, she also shows conclusively that Mary Surratt was indeed one of the conspirators, not simply the mother of one of them.

Still, it is hard to read the accounts of the trial without having sympathy for Surratt. Had her son, John, returned to the States from a Confederate spying mission in Canada to testify on her behalf, it is likely she would have been found innocent or pardoned. Her lawyer disappeared following his opening remarks, leaving her in the hands of two much less experienced attorneys. Then there were the newspapers. As Larson writes, "Vilified and caricatured in the mostly Northern newspapers that carried reports from the courtroom, Mary endured almost continual aspersions against her femininity, religion, age, physical appearance, and demeanor."

Ironically, popular opinion moved in Surratt's favor after her execution and she became the poster child for the innocent Southern martyr at the hands of a "vengeful and vindictive Northern political machine." But for Larson, there is only one conclusion: Mary Surratt "decided to assist [Booth] in whatever way she could. In providing a warm home, private encouragement, and material support to Abraham Lincoln's murderer, she offered more than most of Booth's other supporters. For that, Mary Surratt lost her life and must forever be remembered as the assassin's accomplice." ♥

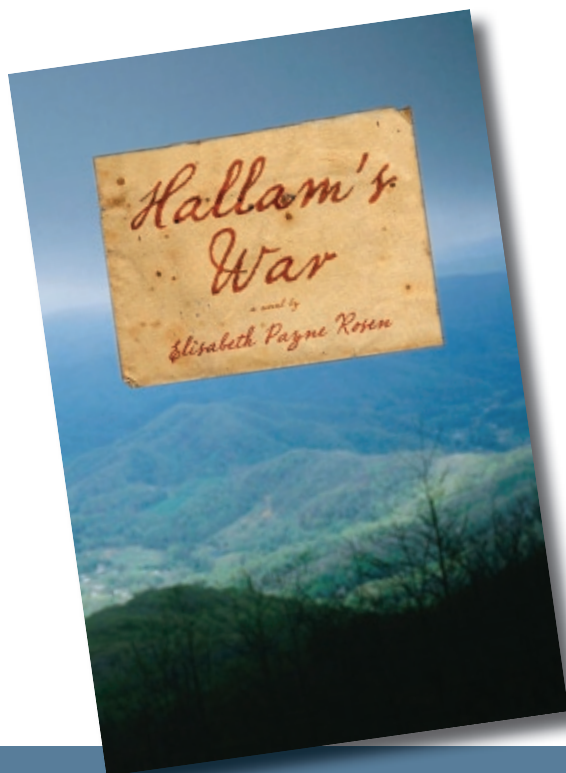


—FAYE JONES

HALLAM'S WAR

by Elisabeth Payne Rosen

A sweeping story of passion, steadfast loyalty and uncommon love, and of a family struggling to survive, set against the devastation of the Civil War



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"Contains enough romance and history to draw Miss Scarlett's fans like flies to honey... a winner for the historical fiction crowd."

—LIBRARY JOURNAL