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A Spy of His Own Confession: A Revolution in American Espionage

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Abstract:

The most well known spies are usually the ones who were caught. But what about those who took their secret lives to the grave?

In the summer of 1778, arguably one of the biggest players in the United States' fight for independence was released from a rebel-controlled prison in Connecticut. Abraham Woodhull, arrested earlier in the year for smuggling, was offered his freedom in exchange for his loyalty to the continental army. His friend, Major Benjamin Tallmadge, was looking to replace the dated espionage methods employed by his superior officer and contentious rival.

In just a few short years, the organization they created would change the tide of the war – and all of espionage – forever.

Executive Summary:

In the summer of 1778, the American Revolution was at an unusual stalemate. All of Britain's supply ships were coming into New York City from Ireland, making the Island of Manhattan a critical stronghold. At the same time, Britain was ready to lead a campaign north to take West Point, which would cut the resistance in half, and separate the rebels from their supply lines in Connecticut. If the British left New York, Washington could sweep in, capture the city, and cut off the British soldiers from re-supplies. If Washington left the New York area, then the British could do the same to West point.

General Washington needed information; if he knew which generals were staying in Manhattan, what supplies were coming in, and what defenses were being built, he could plan his actions accordingly and with little risk of losing the Hudson Valley. That's where the Culper Ring came in.

Earlier in the war military intelligence was carried out in short recon missions. Officers would sneak behind enemy lines to gather scraps of intelligence, knowing that if they were caught, they would have no reasonable excuse for being there. Nearly half of these missions ended in capture and execution. Because every minute in enemy territory was life threatening, spies could rarely stay in place long enough to learn anything useful. When it came to New York City, agents would need to find a way to pass closely monitored security checkpoints just to get onto the Island of Manhattan, which was swarming with British soldiers.

After a series of particularly bad missions in which then-spymaster Charles Scott lost all but two of his men, Washington decided to try something else. He allowed his favored Major, Benjamin Tallmadge of Setauket, to assemble a team of civilian operatives. Tallmadge believed that a spy *network* deep in enemy territory was the key to long term, high quality information. He set out recruiting his childhood friends who lived on Long Island and New York City to spy for him, and used whaleboat captain Caleb Brewster to smuggle the information across the Long Island sound, into friendly territory.

Some of the Culper Agents, namely Robert Townsend, were able to gain the trust and confidence of prominent loyalists in New York City; which led to the thwarting of a counterfeit plot that would've destabilized the Continental Congress's currency, the protection of the French Fleet from a full-scale British attack, the discovery of Benedict Arnold's treason, and even the capture of British Spymaster John Andre.

Despite these incredibly important feats pulled off by just a handful of patriots, the Culper Ring is an obscure piece of history. Every agent managed to take their secret well beyond their grave; the full extent of their accomplishments wasn't known until more than 150 years after the American Revolution. Understanding the secretive yet effective nature of the Culper Ring is crucial in understanding the evolution and development of espionage, from brute force high-risk-low-reward spectacles, to long term and intricate organizations operating in deep cover.

In my research, I started by reviewing secondary sources, and more general summaries of the Culper Ring's activities. I read Alexander Rose's book: Washington's Secret Six. This gave me the broad overview of the Ring I needed to get started. Next, I wanted to learn about specific agents in the ring on a more personal level. I read

memoirs. Letters between agents helped fill in the remaining gaps in my information. Initially, I could spend a whole afternoon trying to make it through one letter, but after a lot of practice I was able to read through them much more quickly. After I had a good amount of knowledge about the events and the players involved, I wanted to learn about the locations where it all took place.

I took a trip to Setauket, the town where Abraham Woodhull, Austin Roe, Caleb Brewster, and Anna Strong did most of their work for the Culper Ring. Most of the buildings of historic significance were destroyed in the early 20th century. A few survived, and the Three Village Historical Society was able to show me around the area. I was able to visit conscience bay, where the agents met to exchange information. After exploring Setauket, I went to Oyster Bay to visit the family home of Robert Townsend, one of the most important operatives. Unlike most of the other historic sites, the Townsend house was well preserved. I was able to visit the room where Colonel Simcoe and Major John Andre stayed while garrisoned on Long Island.

Being able to immerse myself in the Culper Ring's History allowed me to write a thorough and – what I hope to be a compelling – account of their actions and achievements.

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Project Body:

I. 1776

Early Espionage: The One-Man Missions

September 21st

The Weary Traveller Alehouse

New York, New York

A lanky blonde haired man sits at the bar rail; reading over a few small leafs of paper by candlelight. He takes a gulp from his tall glass, emptying it.

“Another pint, please,” the man asks the barkeep. The grizzled man nods, taking the guest’s glass and walking over to a cask behind the bar.

“What business do you have in New York?” The barkeep asks casually, opening the tap.

“I am a schoolteacher,” the man replies quickly.

The barkeep closes the tap and drops a fresh pint of ale before the patron. “Not quite what I was asking. What are you doing here? – I mean. I don’t recall seeing you around before.” Another customer sitting at a corner table looks up from his untouched beer. He pauses briefly to scratch at his beard before looking down again and swirling his mug pensively.

“Oh yes, I’m only visiting,” The guest replies. Then he remarks, “It appears to be somewhat of a slow evening.”

The barkeep nods. “Had some crowds earlier, but word came there was a fire spreading through the city, set by those bloody rebels. Regulars all left to try and help, I’d imagine. Of course, someone had to stay and look after the place.” He gestures to the nearly empty room.

The guest smiles approvingly.

The bartender picks up a rag and throws it over his arm. “Excuse me sir, I have to do a bit of straightening up before closing.” He crosses the room and begins cleaning the tables of glassware, which had all been left in a hurry.

Looking bored, the customer from the corner table crosses the room to sit at the bar. The out-of-towner hastily sweeps up his papers, folds them, and stuffs them into his coat pocket.

“Relax,” the stranger says casually, “I think the both of us are here for the same purpose.”

“I-I’m afraid I have no idea what you’re talking about,” the man answers.

“My name is John Rogers,” he leans in, “I’m here to gather information on British troop movements,” he whispers.

“You are as well? The patron asks, intrigued.

“I was correct in my thinking then?” Rogers asks.

“Indeed you were. Were you ordered by General Washington to cross onto Long Island?”

“Of course I was ordered, it’s a dangerous job and if I’m honest, I’m not entirely certain I’m up to the task,” Rogers admits.

“I *volunteered*,” the first man flourishes. “My family and friends think I’m mad to come here, but I’m tired of sitting idly by. I want to do something in this war to support the cause.”

“I envy your courage, Mr.—” Rogers trails off. “What did you say your name was?”

“Of course, where are my manners? Nathan Hale is my name,” Hale introduces himself, and shakes Rogers’s hand firmly.

“Might I ask something of you, Mr. Hale?”

“Certainly you may.”

“I lack your bravery, but have some resources that might be of use to you. Perhaps if we collaborate, we would be more effective in gathering information,” Rogers proposes.

“What a brilliant idea!”

The ceiling creaks above them. Both men look up to the rafters and follow the sound of footsteps on the second floor.

“Not here, Mr. Hale,” Rogers says in undertone. “I’ve a house where I’m staying not far from here. We can speak freely there without fear of being overheard.”

“I’ll follow your lead then.” Nathan Hale leans forward as if to stand up.

“No, we mustn’t leave at the same time, we don’t want to arouse suspicion,” Rogers jerks his head toward the barkeep, who is in the process of scraping dried candlewax off an oak tabletop near the center of the tavern. “Perhaps you should stay here a few moments more, and then join me outside.”

Hale nods. His companion gets up and leaves the room quietly.

After nervously wrapping his knuckles on the bar for several minutes, Nathan decides enough time has passed that he can leave without causing the barkeep to become suspicious. He leaves a hay penny beside his drink and dismounts his barstool.

“Leaving, sir?” the barkeep asks politely.

“Yes indeed. Have a pleasant night,” Hale replies. As he slips out the front door and inhales the smoky air, the barkeep closes and bolts the door. Hale looks in either direction of the Tavern but see no sign of Rogers – simply a desolate street with an orange glow burning over the distant rooftops.

Careful to avoid the light pouring from the bar’s window, Hale crouches down and skirts alongside the narrow storefront to the adjacent alleyway. A dim light creeps from the alley, and a pair of long shadows dance on the road, just beyond the mouth of the side street. Hale stops short of the building’s end, curious.

“...You’re sure, sir?” Someone whispers from around the corner.

“He all but admitted it. And the man is a nervous wreck, jumpy. Even simple questions appear to catch him off guard. He’s no schoolteacher,” Rogers says, in an undertone.

Hale creeps closer so as to better hear the conversation. His fingers find the edge of the Tavern’s brick façade and he stops.

“He doesn’t recognize you?” The first man asks.

“No. I told him my name was John,” Rogers explains. “He’s waiting inside the tavern, he believes I am on his side. General Howe was right to keep us on alert. We should bring this man in for *interrogation* as soon—”

Hale gasps.

The whispering in the alleyways stops.

“Sir?” Rogers’ companion asks.

“Keep your voice down, I thought I heard something,” Rogers growls. “All the more reason to move quickly. You go around and gather the rest of the Rangers from the

barracks – be quick about it – and come around the back entrance of the Tavern. I want the building surrounded. I’ll go and watch the front door to be sure he doesn’t leave.”

“Understood, sir.”

Dropping any sense of stealth he had, Hale turns and bolts, painfully aware of his thunderous footfalls on the desolate street.

“That’s him! That’s Nathan Hale!” Rogers hollers, stepping out of the alley, “he’s headed for the river!”

Rogers’s man draws a flintlock pistol and fires, but the distance is too great for an accurate shot.

“You insufferable dog!” Rogers yells. He pushes the ranger’s arm down. “General Howe will want him alive.”

Hale manages to slip outside of the city proper, but has the sense to slow down and divert his course to avoid being picked up by a patrol of rangers. He presses on, trying to reach the banks of the East River near Salt Meadows, where a ship waits to smuggle him back to rebel-held territory, but has lost too much of his small lead over Rogers. A warning shot zooms over Hale’s head.

“Give yourself up!” Someone yells from between the trees, just up the bank. Hale manages to run a few more paces before a second warning shot cuts through the air like a cracking whip. The gunfire is closer this time, nearly unseating Nathan’s cap. He manages to dive for cover behind the stump of a thick oak. Hale can hear lapping water, but sees no sign of his escape boat.

“Get back here *boy!*” Rogers yells from up the bank.

“I thought you were a patriot, John!” Hale shouts back.

Rogers laughs, "My name is not John, you knave. I'm Robert Rogers!"

The underbrush rustles as the Rangers move around to flank Hale.

"Don't make us come down 'n get you," another voice calls.

Recognizing his inevitable capture Hale scans the underbrush around him. After he is certain none of the rangers can presently see him, he hastily removes his shoe, takes the documents he had been carrying in his coat pocket, and stuffs them beneath his sole.

"Wait!" Hale cries out. He jams his foot back into the shoe. "I give myself up! Please, there is no need to shoot."

Hale steps out from behind the oak with his hands above his head.

"Bind him," Rogers orders, "and tell General Howe we have a *visitor* that I should like for him to meet."

"Sir," an attendant pushes open the door a crack, and knocks gently to announce his presence.

"Yes? What do you require?" General William Howe asks.

"Robert Rogers requests an audience with you, sir."

"Rogers? Tell him I'm indisposed. With some of the men dispatched to handle the fires, I need to ensure we have enough men to properly patrol the city," Howe barks dismissively.

"That's just it sir; Rogers and his men say they've captured a rebel in possession of some damaging information."

"Just the one?" Howe inquires.

“Yes, sir. Rogers claims he found the man alone in a local tavern, looking over suspicious documents.” The attendant explains.

“Send him in then. I should like to know how the devil he managed to enter the city in the first place,” Howe orders.

The attendant nods, and scurries out of the room. Almost before the door can swing all the way shut, Rogers pushes both of the double doors leading to Howe’s makeshift office wide open, and marches in. A pair of rangers closely follows him – each has a firm grip on one of Hale’s arms to prevent another attempted escape. His hands are bound too, for good measure.

“At ease, Rogers,” Howe says. Rogers relaxes a little, folding his hands behind his back. “This is the rebel agent, then?”

“Yes, sir,” Rogers nods.

“I haven’t the faintest idea what you’re talking about,” Hale stammers, “I’m a schoolteacher visiting New York to—”

“How dare you address the General in such fashion,” Rogers exclaims, “That’s sir, to you!”

“P-pardon me, sir, I’m only visiting New York,” Hale manages.

“What did you say his name is?” Howe asks Rogers, ignoring the prisoner.

“Nathan Hale, sir,” Rogers answers.

“Well Mr. Hale, why should I believe you? I haven’t known many innocent teachers to run from British soldiers,” Howe remarks.

Before Hale can speak again, Rogers cuts across him, “We found this on him.” He places Nathan’s forged papers identifying him as an educator. Howe looks over the certificate carefully.

“This man could actually be a teacher then,” he says slowly.

“We also found these.” Rogers lays out several scraps of crumpled paper bearing drawings and notes. “Maps of our encampments along the Hudson. And rough copies of our troop formations for battle,” he explains.

Howe studies the smuggled information with a look of disbelief.

“Who are you really?”

Nathan stares down at his feet forlornly, and then looks directly at the General. “I am Captain Nathan Hale, of the 19th Regiment of the Continental army,” he says, “and I volunteered to gather intelligence behind enemy lines.”

“A spy?” Howe demands.

“Yes, sir,” Hale replies.

Howe leans back in his chair, and places the incriminating documents casually on the desk. “Do you know why I’m here?” Howe asks politely.

Hale pauses. “Surely, you’re here to stop the continental army, to stop the colonies from rising up,” he finally answers.

“That may be what I am *doing* here, yes, but what I’m doing, and why, are quite different,” Howe responds. Hale looks at him with a puzzled expression. “I’m here because I was *ordered* to be here,” Howe explains. “The truth of the matter is that I don’t want to be here fighting this damned war. I opposed the same taxes and policy in Britain that the rebels fought against in the colonies. I brought the same concerns before

parliament – the very same concerns that you share. But make no mistake that is *all* we share; no honorable man would resolve to sneaking around as a coward or thief.

“There were many of us who wanted to reconcile this whole incident peaceably. You and your like wanted this conflict. Think well on that,” Howe says. He shakes his head solemnly.

“How would you like to handle this, sir?” Rogers asks. Howe looks over the scraps of parchment again, holding each one up to the candlelight.

“This is very serious. If Mr. Hale had made it out of New York and rejoined the ranks of the rebels, this information—” Howe waves around a crude drawing of an army camp, “—could have cost us control of the mouth of the Hudson. You know how important that is? We’re struggling to hold even *part* of the river valley. We can’t afford breaches like this; we need to set an example. I want him hung, first thing tomorrow morning.”

Hale bows his head.

“Understood,” Rogers says.

“Now get him out of my presence. Take him someplace where he can’t run off again,” Howe orders, dismissing Hale and the Rangers with a wave. The prisoner is roughly led out of the room.

“The rebels appear to be even more gutless than we had thought. To stoop so low as to use officers as spies...” Howe trails off. “In either case, excellent work Rogers. You ought to go and get some rest. Report here tomorrow so we may dispatch the prisoner.”

“Yes sir. Have a pleasant night.” Rogers exits, leaving Howe alone in the dimly lit study.

“That’s enough for tonight,” Howe decides. The general leans over his desk, and blows out his lamp.

September 22nd, 1776

This morning, we put to death Captain Nathan Hale, a spy of his own confession, who was deemed guilty of high treason against the crown. He was found in possession of maps of our camps, along with notes detailing our planned troop movements for upcoming conflicts, and was Hung in the town square. His last words were as follows: “My one regret is that I have but one life to give for my country.”

Nathan Hale is arguably one of the least successful spies this country has ever known. His story was shaky at best, his mission vague, and with no connections to aide in his mission, his failure was almost guaranteed from the start. Hale emulated several traits that are not becoming of practitioners of espionage; he was handsome and distinctly recognizable, making it impossible to travel unnoticed. He was also brutally honest and actually confessed to being a spy immediately upon being captured.

Yet Captain Hale went down in history as a great American hero, and the spirit of fearless loyalty to the cause of liberty. Both are true. Hale failed miserably as a spy – of that there is no question – but his failure was a major learning experience for General Washington, and the future Culper Agents.

The main reason that Hale was unsuccessful, aside from his explicit confession, was his cover story. A Dutch schoolmaster had no more business paying a visit to New York than did Hale himself. The story probably seemed odd even to him. No man, or woman for that matter, could justify routine trips into the British stronghold simply for the purpose of wandering the streets. An agent without purpose was easy to spot. This highlighted the need for an accomplished and well-organized network of spies, which Benjamin Tallmadge would go on to create a little more than a year after Hale's valiant – but ultimately fruitless – mission.

II. 1778
Establishing
Connections: Founding the
Culper Ring

August 20th

Continental Army Jailhouse

New Haven, Connecticut

Abraham shifts his weight in a futile attempt to make himself comfortable, scraping against hard stone. He drums his fingers on the wooden bench that is secured to the cell wall, and turns his head to look out of his tiny barred window. The summer sun beats down, heating the cramped room while affording little breeze. Abraham lifts his hand to wick beads of sweat from dripping down into his eyes. He looks enviously to the neighboring cells that are out of direct sunlight.

In the distance, a door slams. The echo reverberates down the brick hallway, mixed with loud and purposeful footsteps. Once Abraham hears the telltale jingling of keys, he knows the jailer is approaching.

“Good afternoon to ye, Woodhull,” The jailer says, not unkindly.

“Same to you, Emery,” Abraham replies.

“You have a visitor,” Emery announces.

“Who?”

“The man says he is an old friend of yours.”

The heavy hallway door creaks open and slams again, and the hallway is once more filled with the echoes of footfalls – though these steps are quieter and more deliberate.

“Good afternoon, Abraham.” A battle-worn, long-faced man in a blue uniform steps out of the shadowy hallway, into the slats of light along the floor.

“Ben?” Abraham asks, incredulously.

“No, it’s Captain Benjamin Tallmadge now,” he replies with a grin.

“I’ll take my leave,” Emery says before backing into the hall. Abraham waits for the door to slam, signifying that the two are alone, before speaking.

“Are you mad? Showing up here, in uniform? That can’t be safe!” He exclaims.

“This is not Long Island, Abraham,” Tallmadge chuckles. “We are finding Connecticut to be quite sympathetic to our cause. The Patriots are running the Tories right out of the colony.”

“That sounds more heavy support than sympathy,” Abraham comments.

Tallmadge smiles. “Battlefront news aside then, how did you come to be here?”

“This past spring, I was sailing to Connecticut with some of my goods, when a patrolling ship, American no-less, boarded us. They accused me of *‘illegal trading,’* and threw me in here. And here is where I have been ever since.” Abraham explains.

“Well, was all of your shipping and trading *‘above board?’*” Tallmadge inquires.

Abraham grumbles, stroking his chin for a moment before answering. “With all the shipping regulations, you know, even an honest man is apt to break a few laws on incident,” he deflects.

Tallmadge shakes his head in disappointment.

“An American ship arrested me for bringing staple foods into New York.

“That’s beside the point, Ben. What have you come here for? Surely if you wanted to make idle conversation, you would have written me, rather than made the trip in person,” Abraham says.

“Indeed,” Tallmadge nods. “As I said, the whole of Connecticut is supportive. That support *may* be enough to have you released.” Abraham jumps to his feet and dashes to the cell door. He grasps the wrought bars with his hands.

“How soon?” he demands, eagerly.

“As soon as I can speak with Governor Trumbull. He is on our side as well,” Tallmadge, answers, “However, we must ask something of you in return.” Abraham immediately releases the bars and wipes the rust from his hands on the leg of his pants. He turns his back to Tallmadge and paces the cell.

“What could you possibly need from me? I lack currency with which to fund you. I lack any supplies that would be of use to you. And even if I *did*, I live surrounded by Tories. I cannot afford to be mixed up in all this! My own neighbors will rally against me!” Abraham fumes.

“Calm down, old friend. I do not want your money, nor do I want you to start funneling supplies. In fact, if all goes according to plan, I do not even want your neighbors to *know* where your loyalties lie,” Tallmadge explains.

“I am sorry. I do not understand.”

“Information, Abraham,” Tallmadge whispers. “Do you know how many failed missions I have watched? How many agents have been sent in poorly planned expeditions? Nathan Hale was my friend, and I cared for him deeply, but he was sent on a fool’s errand. No man, no matter how cunning, can come and go to British territory as he pleases to wander about without rising suspicion.”

“And you would have me do just that? To meet the same fate Nathan did?” Abraham asks fiercely.

“Of course not. You wouldn’t wander without purpose as he did. You said yourself; you live in the midst of Tories. Do they ever distrust you? Our neighbors in Setauket?” Tallmadge pries.

“No, they know I have always lived there, along with my family.”

“Then you would never draw suspicion walking the docks in the harbor, collecting gossip in town—”

Abraham cuts across Tallmadge: “Certainly not, I have business there.”

“And *that* is how this will be different. There will be no sneaking around, no creeping behind enemy lines because you are already there, in plain sight,” Tallmadge says. “All I ask in return for your negotiated release is for you to perform activities *Abraham Woodhull* would routinely perform, do *whatever* it takes to appear a loyalist, and report any findings you may have on British movements. Does your sister still live in New York City?”

“In a boarding house, run by her husband, yes. Why?” Abraham asks.

“Then visit her from time to time. You have cause to. General Washington has been trying to establish a channel of information into New York for the past two years. Anything you overhear could be instrumental in the survival of the Continental Army,” Tallmadge pleads.

Abraham puts his hands on his head, and paces across his cell, stopping by the window. He stands on tiptoe to peer through the bars, catching a glimpse of the freedom he was being promised.

“I cannot promise how *interesting* or *useful* the information will be, but if I stumble onto anything, I’ll make note of it,” Abraham agrees. “But how am I to get this information to you? You yourself said running across lines gets your men killed.”

“The General is still working through the finer planning of it all, but I have some ideas. You remember Caleb Brewster?”

August 23rd

Outer Harbor

New York, New York

Through the lens of the spyglass, all the damage is visible – even in the twilight. Caleb strains to see if the cracks and breaches in the British ships’ hulls were caused by the recent storm, or by cannon fire. Despite a recent skirmish with the French navy, the biggest concern for British commanders is shoddy craftsmanship. Years prior – during the Seven Years War – Britain scrambled to bolster the size of its navy to gain a key advantage over French adversaries. In their haste, British ship builders incorrectly assumed that North American Oaks were the same species as England Oaks. Unlike their European counterpart, the North American variety are terrible for shipbuilding, though this fact was not immediately visible. After about 20 years the oak began to rot and crack under the slightest stress, leaving much of the navy in disrepair –to the advantage of the rebels.

“Damaged mast, tangled rigging,” Caleb mutters to himself, inspecting the enemy fleet carefully. “Well *you* will not be going anywhere for quite some time,” he remarks as he focuses on a badly damaged 50-gunner. The ship sits low in the water, and crewmembers scramble up from the lower decks with bail buckets. Her sides are buckled, pierced in several places by gunfire. Hasty repairs appear to have been made.

“Sir?” One of the crew approaches, surprising Caleb.

“What is it boy?”

“Are you certain this is safe? What if they see us?”

“Of course we’re safe; and if they see us, what of it? We have been making port here long before them. We have just as much right to be in the harbor as they do. More so, even,” Caleb reasons.

The rest of the crew remains quiet, focused on the task of keeping the small boat in place with their oars. A crewmember occasionally grunts.

“But spying, Mr. Brewster?”

Caleb scoffs. “The sun is down and there is hardly any light to see by. The British have lit their ships so brightly you could see them plainly from England itself. We have yet to put up our lanterns, the lobster backs won’t be able to make out a single crew member, let alone what we’re up to.”

“Well then, have you learned anything useful?”

“The French attack damaged the fleet badly. The storm took a toll as well. Some of their largest warships will need repairs,” Caleb explains.

“And what about the galleons there?” The young man inquires.

“Which?” Caleb demands.

The deckhand points to an inlet where a large crowd of redcoats is gathering. Next to the inlet is a long, tall dock, which juts out into the harbor. Caleb raises the spyglass to his eye for a better look. He first notices that the crowd on the dock is armed, in full uniform, and carrying their packs. Some haul carts filled with provisions. He follows the procession of troops, marching along the dock, to four large transport ships, already brimming with British forces.

“Some of the occupying force appears to be moving, but to where?” Caleb asks the night air. Then: “We need to find out where they’re going.”

“Are you mad? We’re in enough danger as it stands,” the deckhand protests.

“We *have* to get closer. The General needs to know where these troops are headed,” Caleb reminds him.

“Well, you can’t simply make port and ask them. It may seem innocent enough now, but if General Washington takes that information and organizes an ambush, someone is bound to be back asking questions.”

“No, you’re right, we can’t expose ourselves to that kind of scrutiny,” Caleb agrees. He thinks for a moment as the violet sky fades to a deeper blue. The view of the ships subsides until Caleb can no longer see the waterline, only the lights twinkling from the deck. Caleb collapses his spyglass, and wipes the lens with his handkerchief. He then places it in a pouch on his belt.

“Then again, it’s mostly dark. What if we row over near the ships, pretend we’re looking to dock?” Caleb mused.

“Captain!” A second crewmember protests, dropping his oar in surprise. He scrambles to pick it up again, and gradually eases back into the rowing cadence, gently stroking to keep the boat still against the receding tide that threatened to pull them away from the harbor.

“I haven’t gone mad. Feel the air; the night is dead calm. Even if they do give chase, how long do you reckon it takes to set sail in one of those galleons? And with no wind, they cannot catch us. They won’t get close enough to recognize us. None of us have to show our faces,” Caleb reasons.

“Good heavens, you *must* be joking. As if it were not bad enough that we are spying from afar, you want to try and sneak over to them?” The deckhand asks incredulously. Caleb nods solemnly.

“The risk is incredible, people have been killed for much less,” the young man says.

“I know the risk,” Caleb replies.

“Then why, Mr. Brewster?” A third rower demands, lowering his oar.

Caleb leans against the gunwale and exhales deeply.

“Do you remember Nathan Hale?” Caleb asks.

“He was that Captain of a regiment in the Continental Army, the one who was executed for treason a few years back, correct?” The deckhand questions him.

“Yes. A friend of mine from back home knew Captain Hale very well. He told me what the man’s last words were, when he stood on the gallows and waited to die. Do you know what he said?”

The crew looks at one another and shakes their heads.

“He said, ‘I only regret that I have but one life to loose for my country.’” Caleb recalls. If the British win, then everything that Hale worked for, everything that the Continental army is fighting for, all of it will be for nothing. We owe our country the same courage.

“If you’re not going to come with me, I’ll swim over there myself! If any of you are in objection to this, make it known now. But I for one will not stay back in comfort and safety while our brothers risk our lives fighting the redcoats in the fields and the forests, on the shores and riverbeds.” Caleb declares.

The crew all nod and give whispered cheers.

“Brilliant. Now take us into the shore, slow at the catch, feather close to the water, now!” Caleb hisses.

Following orders closely, the crew takes long, slow strokes and keeps their oar blades near the surface, gliding silently across the glassy water of the Harbor. The whaling vessel nears one of the galleons docked further out in the harbor.

“Give the ship a wide berth lads, and we can still appear as a whaling ship making port,” Caleb orders. Then he turns to the deckhand and says: “Boy, go to the bow and be sure we’ll clear of the ship before we turn into the harbor.”

“Yes Mr. Brewster.” In his haste, the young man trips over a coil of rope, tied off to a harpoon leaning against the one of the boat’s deep sides. The sound of clanging metal rings out and echoes across the water to the shoreline. Every man aboard the boat visibly cringes, the crew holding its collective breath and stealing nervous glances to the distant docks to see if they had raised the alarm. A few moments – that felt like hours – passed, and Caleb saw no noticeable change in manner of the soldiers on the dock.

“I believe we’re alright,” he comments, “but for all our sakes, watch where you’re walking, boy.”

“Sorry sir.”

Caleb ignores the apology, busy straining his ears to hear the slightest mention of where the troops are headed. By now the late evening has slipped into early night, and the darkness is so thick that each crewmember can hardly see the man sitting in front of him.

“We’re too far away captain,” one of the sailors speaks up. “You won’t hear a damned thing from out here.”

“You’re right, we ought to go closer,” Caleb replies plainly.

“Sir?”

Caleb ignores the protest, and issues an order in a strained whisper: “Give me a hard pull from the port side now.” Begrudgingly, the crewmembers on the left side of the boat take an aggressive stroke, angling the boat toward the shore. A few more strokes and the boat is just a stone’s throw from the dock.

Then, Caleb is blinded.

A beam of light from a brightly burning lantern shines across the boat. Caleb shields his eyes while they adjust to the exposure. After a few seconds, he can make out a redcoat soldier holding the light source.

“Oy! What are you lot doing in ‘ere? This port is *not* for civilians,” The redcoat barks.

Caleb’s heart sinks, realizing that in the darkness, he’d brought the whaling ship much closer to the dock than he had intended; the soldier was no more than twenty feet away from their position. The rowers stop abruptly, moving forward with blades squared, ready to beat a hasty retreat – but an attempt to do so would be foolish at this range. While it would be easy to out-row a galleon in dead-wind from far away, the ship is far too close, and has fallen into musket range. He knows they are caught. But unlike Captain Hale before him, Caleb is not ready to surrender and confess.

“Sorry about that sir, but we’ve no idea where we are,” he lies.

“You are trespassing in a British Naval port and that’s all you need to know.” The soldier shoots back.

“We are all terribly sorry, and we meant no harm by this. But we stayed out fishing longer than we intended, you see, and as we were bringing her in—” Caleb bangs his palm on the whaling boat for emphasis, “—my deckhand, careless boy he is, tripped over an ‘arpoon and broke our lantern.” Caleb manages a laugh. “Then the sun goes down, and we can’t see damned near anything. We were afraid of running aground someplace when we saw your lights here.”

The redcoat watchman ponders the story for a moment before laughing himself. “Sounds like you’ve had quite a spot of bad luck then,” He chuckles. Hearing the commotion, another patrolling guard joins the first.

“What’s going on here?” he asks.

“Clumsy deckhand has this poor lot rowing around in the dark,” the first explains. “You think you can run ashore and bring them a lantern?” Then, he whispers: “Just be sure not to take it from one of the ships bound for Rhode Island, they’ll be sailing through non-stop, dark or no.”

“Alright,” The second watchman grunts, and briskly sets off for a supply crate nearby. He takes up a lantern that is already lit, and brings it back to the Whaling boat. Caleb motions for his crew to paddle closer to the dock, bringing them within arms reach of the pier.

“Here you go, then,” the first soldier hands off the lantern to Caleb. “Normally wouldn’t do this, but we can’t have you docking ‘ere. Not tonight. Now git!”

Not needing a second reminder, the crew quickly resumes paddling, this time with the illumination of Caleb’s pilfered lantern. No one dares to speak until the ship is well

beyond earshot, and far out of sight of the harbor. Then one by one, the boat boils over with excitable chatter.

“I can’t believe it...”

“How we got away with that, I’ll never...”

“But when he shone the lantern on us, I thought we were finished...”

“And then he *gave us* a light to take with us! Hah!”

“I’ve never been more afraid in my life...”

“Exciting though...”

After allowing this to go on for a few moments, Caleb motions for the group to simmer down. The conversation falls from a low roar to a few whispers, to silence once again.

“My friends, thank you for what you did tonight. I’m terribly sorry for putting you in a position of danger,” Caleb says, “but you’ve all done a great service for the future of this nation! We know where the British ships are going; now we must get this information to General Washington.”

August 25th

Washington's Quarters

Hudson Valley, New York

“It’s foolish! We cannot keep risking men like this,” Tallmadge shouts.

“They bring back *vital* information when the missions are successful,” counters General Charles Scott. Tallmadge shakes his head.

“No, no, no, they bring back, *bits* of information. ‘The British Troops are moving!’ Where? ‘The British fleet is damaged!’ How many ships?” Tallmadge fumes. “The risk is too great for too little information, no. We have need operatives *embedded* in enemy territory that can move freely without attracting suspicion.” He slams his fist down on the table.

“We’ve learned the hard way that our officers stand out obviously in enemy territory when they step into plain sight. They’re brave soldiers, but untrained for this kind of work,” Scott says.

The canvas tent flap rustles. A hand reaches through the slit cut for the door, pulling back the fabric. General Washington steps into the tent. Scott and Tallmadge stop squabbling to salute Washington.

“Sir,” they both say in unison.

“At ease, Gentlemen,” Washington orders, removing his tri-fold hat and placing it upon the table, beside a map of the Long Island Sound. “Now, just what was it that you two were arguing about?”

“Captain Tallmadge is dissatisfied with our intelligence gathering. He thinks his *ideas* are more effective than the time-tested reconnaissance strategies that we have perfected over the course of decades,” Scott chuckles.

“Sir,” Tallmadge pleads, “We need a *network*, not just high-risk missions. We are loosing good men over scraps of information! We are still completely in the dark as far as Manhattan is concerned. We don’t know how many troops are stationed there; we don’t know when the fleet comes in. That island is completely dependent on resupply provisions from the British Empire, if we could cut off the supply chain we could choke out the occupying force and regain control of the Hudson. But we don’t know when the Cork Fleet comes in, and we have no way of finding out,” he fumes.

Washington ponders over this for a moment, pulling out a crude stool from beneath the table to sit down. Tallmadge and Scott do the same; Scott, tapping his boot impatiently on the dirt floor of the tent, kicking up small puffs of dust.

“I fail to understand what having this *network* will accomplish that intelligence missions cannot,” Scott counters. “Our agents have reported

“And how many times have your men brought back information about troops marching in formation out of the city and into battle, urging us to prepare? Then no such attacks occur?” Tallmadge demands.

“The commanders are toying with us, we know enough to say that,” Washington agrees. “I’ve lost track of the amount of reports we’ve had about major troop movements that turned out to be nothing more than glorified training exercises.”

“Exactly. The problem is that our current missions are too brief! The operatives are in and out before they can determine if the Tories are playing us for fools, or if the redcoats are truly on the move,” Tallmadge says.

“Then we lengthen the missions,” Scott counters.

“Yes, at tremendous risk to your operatives. How long do you suppose an agent can sneak around the most well fortified enemy encampment in the colonies?” Tallmadge reasons. “Only an embedded operative – someone who is always in the area, someone who could convincingly play the part of a loyalist – can stay in place for so long.”

“You’re talking about civilian operatives,” Scott balks.

Tallmadge nods.

“I am hesitant to try such a radical approach,” Washington says, “but at this point, we are growing desperate for information. My reservation is in choosing who we place our trust in.”

“Have you received word from Caleb Brewster yet?” Scott asks.

“Last contact I had with him, he told me that the British fleet has made port in New York Harbor, and in bad condition,” Washington recounts. “He offered to go into the harbor and give a damage report on the ships. With any luck, we will be able to know if the enemy will be without naval support, and for how long.”

“I have known Caleb a great number of years, and I would trust the man with my life. He will deliver information, I promise you,” Tallmadge assures him.

“If Mr. Brewster is successful, I would like to explore the possibility of having a few more civilian, *informants* to gather intelligence. But obviously trust is an important

factor,” Washington says. “An unreliable operative could give us bad information and lead us into a trap. They could compromise the lives of *all* our men.”

“I know of at least one other man we could trust beyond the shadow of a doubt,” Tallmadge replies, unflinchingly.

“Who?”

“A friend who grew up with Caleb and I in Setauket: Abraham Woodhull,”

Tallmadge answers.

“He is an honest man?”

“Oh of course,” Tallmadge assures him.

“You have fought for me long enough that I trust your judgment. If you say he is trustworthy, I believe you. Where is he now?” Washington inquires.

“Prison, sir.”

“Beg pardon?” Scott interrupts.

“He was arrested for illegally trading staple food provisions for luxuries from the loyalists and dealing in pounds. Sir, the war is hard on everyone, he was just taking advantage of the situation. It does not change how I believe he would perform as an agent. I’ve visited him, and he expressed interest in helping our cause in exchange for his freedom,” Tallmadge says. “Whilst I was in Connecticut, I met with Governor Trumbull. He says he could quietly have Abraham released in the next few days,” he explains

Washington is silent.

“General, the value of his connections are impossible to overstate,” Tallmadge pleads.

“What access does he have?” Scott asks.

“Abraham’s sister lives with her husband in his boarding house in New York city. He has cause to visit frequently. Think of it; a man *that* deep inside enemy territory, walking around freely to gather information without fear of raising suspicion.” Tallmadge says.

“Alright. If you know and trust this man – and he is indeed as well connected as you say he is – I believe we should consider him as a future recruit. Now, it’s a question of waiting for Mr. Brewster’s response,” Washington decides.

August 26th

Continental Army Prison

New Haven, Connecticut

Abraham wakes to the sound of keys clanging against the bars of his cell. He immediately sits upright. He sees the silhouette of the portly jailer, backlit by shafts of moonlight poring in from the opposite cell window.

“Emery?” He asks groggily.

“Word came down from the governor. You’re officially free to go. Your friend must know someone quite high up,” Emery muses. He struggles to find the correct key in the dark.

Looking across the cellblock, Abraham sees a mousy-looking man who has just brought in wakes from his sleep. He sits up and glares enviously at Abraham.

Abraham stands and eagerly approaches the door.

“You behave yourself now, you hear?” Emery says as he finally manages to open the door.

“Thank you.”

“The orders to let you go came down with a message – not sure who from,” the jailer informs him.

“What is the message?”

“Said you are to return to Long Island, go home, and go about business as usual, and that you shall receive a letter from *him* some time in the near future,” Emery recounts.

“*Him*, as in Benjamin? The army captain who came to visit me?” Abraham asks.

Emery shrugs, “It sounded like orders. I suppose it depends on whether you’re accustomed to letting your friends order you around.”

“No,” Abraham replies, “I’m not.”

August 27th

Washington's Quarters

Hudson Valley, New York

August 24th, 1778

To the Honorable Gen. Washington

I am pleased to report great success, due in no small part to the courage of my men. From a distance, I was able to confirm initial reports that the British fleet sustained heavy damage during the recent storm; a number of war galleons and sloops are dry-docked for repairs and have taken hull damage. Another four vessels show signs of mast, rigging, and deck damage. But most important is that the British are on the move; three large galleons bearing reinforcements and guns are bound for Rhode Island, and are scheduled to depart any day now. I believe they are waiting for repairs on one of the war galleons to be completed, so they may bring more troops on their expedition. Whatever their intentions are in Rhode Island, the soldiers are being secretive about their plans; the harbor is being closely watched, and redcoats won't let anyone near the docks.

I pray this letter reaches you in time, and without falling into enemy hands. I have sent it to you by way of a courier I know well, but if I am to continue providing you with information, a more secure channel of communications is necessary.

Sincerely,

B—

Washington finishes reading aloud, and places the letter on his desk. Tallmadge shifts his weight nervously.

“Mr. Brewster managed to acquire and relay more information to us than our officers have over the past few months. I have dispatched a small group of regulars and artillery to turn back the British war ships. This lends some credence to your theory, Tallmadge.”

“Thank you, sir,” Tallmadge replies. “Brewster is right though – we need a better way of delivering messages. We won’t always be able to find a trustworthy courier.”

“And even then, the messages could be intercepted,” Washington countered.

“You bring up an excellent point. I believe this may require some thought.”

“I suggest you get to it then. I want you to develop an intelligence network under the guidance of General Scott. I understand that you have several potential operatives in mind. But you still need to think of a way to quickly get the information from enemy territory to our officers without compromising anyone’s security,” Washington orders. “Good luck.”

“Sir, do you think it is necessary to work with General Scott on this project?” Tallmadge asks.

“I understand that you two do not see eye to eye, but this is an important undertaking that requires both vision, and *experience*. At this point, I’m not sure you have the intelligence gathering experience General Scott has. That may come in time, but for now, you *will* cooperate,” Washington says.

“Yes, sir.”

“New York City has been a blind spot for us since the war began. Because of this information, we can stop the British from storming New Haven. If you’re right, Captain, this could turn the tide of the war. Do not let personal pride stand in the way. Dismissed.”

September 3rd

Setauket Long Island

New York

A round-faced, longhaired man is hanging a shingle off the side of a building. The sign reads, “*Roe Tavern, Rooms Available.*” He steps back to admire his handiwork.

“Afternoon, Austin.”

The man turns around, startled. “Abraham, good to see you!” Austin exclaims.

“Likewise,” Abraham shakes his hand firmly. “Putting up a new sign?”

“No, just fixing this one. It blew down in the storm last night,” Austin explains. “I still can’t believe your family wanted to sell this place.”

Abraham shrugs, “Well, you’ve done a lot with it. How’s business, by the way?”

“Well the same regulars visit the tavern day to day, but I am having problems keeping inventory,” Austin sighs. “My distributor is in New York City, and the Tories set up security checkpoints everywhere. Going in and out takes twice as long as before,” he complains. “But I suppose I am not the only business to suffer. At least the redcoats haven’t forced themselves into the place and demanded I quarter them.”

“Thank heavens for the small blessings then,” Abraham smiles. “Any news?” He changes the subject.

“Matter of fact, yes. Caleb stopped by last night,” Austin says.

“Caleb? Goodness I haven’t seen him in some time, how has he been?”

“He seemed excited about *something*, I’ll tell you that for free. He came in for a pint, chatted for a while. Asked for you, actually,” Austin tells Abraham.

“Did he say what he wanted?”

Austin shakes his head, “He was very coy about it, said he’d only tell you in person. He did leave something for you, though. Hang on a minute, I have it here...” Austin rummages through his pockets before producing a slightly crumpled looking envelope, carefully sealed. Abraham pockets the letter.

“Do you know where I can find him, then?” Abraham asks.

“He rented a room here for the night, but he left early this morning. I’d expect he’s offloaded and shipped out to sea by now, but he said he’d be back within the next few weeks. If you see him, tell him the three of us are overdue to sit down for a few drinks together – Benjamin too. Him I haven’t seen in months,” Austin says.

“He ran into me recently, but under less-than-ideal circumstances. I would appreciate the chance to sit down with everyone on a happy occasion,” Abraham smiles.

“Of course! You’ll have to excuse me, Abraham, but I need to get back inside. And you need to be going as well; Caleb seemed keen on getting you that letter. I would attend to it as soon as possible,” Austin reminds him.

“Right. I will probably run into you again sooner or later. Good afternoon,” Abraham says, taking his leave.

After stopping briefly by the docks to confirm that Caleb Brewster is no longer in port, Abraham unties and mounts his horse from a post near Setauket’s village green. From higher up, he can see a crowd of people gathering by the church on the hilltop. A

handful of redcoats look out at the crowd, bored. One is writing something on a long bit of paper. Another appears to be addressing the group of colonists. A handful of townspeople in the crowd turn, and eye Abraham darkly. Some whisper and point. Confused, and not wanting to attract the attention of the soldiers, he rides off at a brisk trot.

Once inside the study of his family's farmhouse, Abraham draws the blinds, lights a candle on the desk, and hastily tears open the seal of Caleb's mysterious letter – a letter evidently so important it had to be delivered in person, by one of his personal friends.

W—,

I hope that your release was dealt with quickly, and that you are settling into life back home in Setauket. Since you and I last spoke, I have been met with much success, and would like for you to start your venture as soon as possible. Unfortunately, I have some concerns in relation to matters we had previously discussed that I wanted to bring to your attention. The residents of Setauket make no secret about where their loyalties lie – which makes it impossible for me to return home until this conflict is resolved. It also prevented me from speaking with you about this directly.

Your loyalist neighbors have doubtlessly noticed your absence over the past several months; I do not think your business in smuggling was much of a secret, nor was your capture by Continental forces in Connecticut. I expect that rumors of your early

*release will have already reached home – despite my best efforts to keep the ordeal a secret – and that Setauket **will not trust you**. This clearly complicates the task at hand.*

There is no doubt; you must take action to prove your loyalty to your neighbors, and the British alike. The British have announced an opportunity for the colonists to exonerate themselves from blame in the event that the continental army should fail: Redcoats are administering oaths of allegiance, and encouraging everyone they can persuade to swear loyalty to King George III. As I understand it, those who swear this oath will be pardoned if the rebels are defeated. Ordinarily I know you would be apt to keep your head down to avoid drawing ire from either side, but in this case, I believe it may be a good idea for you to swear your loyalty. From what little information we have been able to gather, a garrison should be setting up in Setauket to accomplish this.

Be careful not to seem too eager, lest the redcoats catch on to your true intentions. After you take your oath, I advise you remain in Setauket for a few weeks time, care for your parents, tend your fields, and mingle with the other townspeople as much as you think appropriate. Although our need for information is dire, we need to be sure you are as inconspicuous as possible on your visits to New York City – that means taking these precautions to throw off any suspicion of your activity. B— will return periodically to collect the information you’ve gathered. Perhaps next time you see him, you can arrange a more precise pickup system. I wish you the best of luck, and eagerly await your first report.

Remember: *don’t rush! Your safety and cover are of the utmost importance!*

Truly yours,

T—

Abraham holds the letter in his shaking hands; his eyes unable to look away from the incriminating note.

“They’re already suspicious,” he whispers to himself slowly.

“Abraham!” A voice calls out from somewhere else in the house.

He freezes in terror, and sits motionless in his chair.

“Abraham?” A second voice questions. A floorboard creaks.

He hastily looks across his room, until his eyes fall on the dormant fireplace just a few feet away. Abraham gives the letter a final glance to make sure he hasn’t missed anything.

“Hello?” Footsteps are approaching the study door.

Abraham holds the corner of the letter to the candle on his desk and drops the burning paper into the hearth. As the letter quickly turns to ashes, there is a knock at the door.

“Son?” A voice asks. The door swings open as the flames die down.

“Father?” Abraham smiles as Richard Woodhull steps into the study, leaning on the doorframe for support.

“I am so glad to have you home. Did they treat you well in Connecticut?” His father asks.

“As well as one can be treated in jail, I suppose,” Abraham replies.

“What happened?”

“The rebels caught me selling food in New York. Illegal trading, they say. I didn’t think it would’ve mattered, I’ve been selling our produce to *everyone* for the whole of the war so far, and never gotten myself into trouble,” Abraham shrugs.

His father shakes his head. “Well, we are happy to have you back now at the very least. But there has been talk, ever since your release—” He pauses.

“—That I had cut a deal with the rebels to shorten my sentence?” Abraham finishes.

“Indeed. I must say, it is curious: first Connecticut wants to lock you up and make an example of you, then out of the blue you are released.”

“I didn’t cut any deals to get out, father,” Abraham assures him. “I admit the release came as a surprise to me, but I was just grateful to have my freedom.”

“I just hate to see you under such scrutiny for something over which you have no control,” his father says forlornly.

“You *are* right, but there is something I can do about it,” Abraham replies. “Some of my friends have suggested that I swear an oath of loyalty to dispel any rumors.” His father nods solemnly.

“What ever it takes to keep out of trouble.”

September 5th

Washington's Quarters

Central New York, West of the Hudson

"I have done as you asked, sir. Everything has been set in motion: Mr. Woodhull should begin compiling his reports within the next few weeks," Tallmadge reports.

Washington nods politely. "Excellent work."

"I fear that Mr. Woodhull's neighbors may be suspicious of his early release, but I've instructed him to take appropriate precautions," Tallmadge adds.

"Excellent. When can we expect to start receiving reports?"

"We should receive a steady stream of information from whatever the whaling ships can spot in New York Harbor. And within a few weeks, I'll have Mr.—"

"—Major Tallmadge, on second thought, beyond this point I think it would be best if I didn't know too many specifics about your operation. This may seem overly cautious, but I believe it to be for the best, since we *are* putting civilian lives at risk here," Washington says forcefully.

Tallmadge shifts his weight and bites his tongue. "You're right sir," He agrees.

Washington stands up, and steps back from the table as attendants enter the tent, to begin taking apart his furniture. He sighs. "Part of me is not comfortable with this, but I know that this likely *is* the best way. However, I still want to ensure that the identities of our agents remain carefully guarded secrets. Mr. Brewster had the sense to sign his letter with his initials, but his name was on our earlier correspondence," Washington says.

"What is your point, General?"

“I do not think it wise for your spies to sign their names onto incriminating documents, Major Tallmadge,” He elaborates. “I would recommend code names for everyone involved, including yourself – if you’re recruiting old friends, someone might make the connection and increase scrutiny over Setauket.”

Tallmadge thinks for a moment, staring blankly upward at the canvas of the tent ceiling above, where the lantern hanging from the cross-brace flickers. “I could go by the name *John Bolton*,” Tallmadge pitches.

Washington nods. “Perhaps Mr. Tallmadge could go by *Culpeper*, as in Culpeper County Virginia. Its unique, but still feels believable,” He suggests.

“I think that suits Abraham nicely,” Tallmadge approves. “I shall have him notified about how his correspondence shall be carried out.”

“Excellent. Setting aside the issue of your correspondents for a moment, how are your other troops?” Washington asks.

The attendants return to take down the lanterns that hang from the tent post, as well as a few supply crates that the general has been using for a small shelf.

“My dragoons have prepared to dispatch, but many of them question the decision to move closer to New York City,” Tallmadge answers.

“I believe that it will enable us to strike quickly at the Red Coats, when needed, while leaving us free to escape into friendly territory in Connecticut,” Washington replies. “Besides, moving closer is sure to keep the British on their toes; they need to hold that position badly. Even if we lack the numbers to force them out, the garrison cannot stray to far from their position. We can at least keep them from moving elsewhere and making further territorial gains.”

Washington puts on his hat, and pushes back the canvas tent flap to reveal both senior and lower ranking officials breaking down their tents, rolling the fabric that had kept them dry throughout the late-summer storms, and lashing them onto their crude packs. The General steps out into the flurry of activity with Major Benjamin Tallmadge in tow.

Across a well-trodden dirt path through the encampment, the informally proclaimed quartermaster loads miscellaneous kitchenware and tinning kits into an over packed pull-cart. He stops momentarily to give Washington a dutiful salute. The General returns his gesture.

“I think, sir, that they are curious as to how we have obtained such information,” Tallmadge says.

“Your men are loyal to you, yes?” Washington demands.

Tallmadge nods.

“Then tell them comprehension is not a requisite of compliance. I would rather the regulars know as little as possible about our intelligence channels,” Washington says, “And I will speak no more of it under such public circumstances.” He gestures to the open field, bustling with soldiers and equipment.

“Understood, sir.”

“Now, you have your orders for the meantime, yes?”

“Observe, but do not engage unless it is absolutely unavoidable,” Tallmadge rattles off his previously administered instructions. “The dragoons will try to gather what they can, but stay on the move to avoid detection.”

“You are of better use to me in the field than you are around camp, Major Tallmadge,” Washington remarks. “You can rendezvous with us when we arrive in White Plains, after we have set up some basic fortifications.”

Tallmadge shakes his head, “All this time, and we haven’t had any engagement, I wonder how we will win without even putting up a fight.”

“Patience, Benjamin,” Washington puts his arm on the young Major’s shoulder. “We can’t outnumber the British, but I pray we can *outsmart* them. This will take time. Charging into battle with inferior numbers is the quickest path to defeat.”

September 9th 1778

Setauket Village Green

New York

“Are there any others?” Asks Colonel Benjamin Floyd. He stands beside a crowd of British regulars. The officers look down on a small group of Setauket residents from the steps of the Presbyterian Church, which has been gutted and converted into a British stronghold. The pews have been removed and burned for warmth, and instead, the interior of the church has been made into a stable. From the cemetery beside the church, headstones have been haphazardly moved and converted to makeshift ramparts, between which cannon barrels point downhill toward the rest of the town. Beside Floyd is an empty barrel that he is using as an improvised table. On the lid sits a long piece of parchment bearing a list of names.

“Speak up now, this will be your last chance for months, who knows if the war will even last *that* long,” Floyd chuckles, “A delegation is leaving for England tomorrow morning with this list, and if you truly are loyal you’ll want to be on it.” He lifts the parchment above his head.

Abraham steps forward timidly. “I would like to make my loyalties known,” he declares.

There are confused whispers amid the crowd.

“Very good then,” Floyd smiles. He gestures for Abraham to join him up on the church steps. Abraham does as he is instructed.

“Please raise your right hand, and repeat the oath,” Floyd instructs.

Abraham nods in understanding. Inwardly, he feels his heart sink. Taking a false oath on the steps of a church – even one that had been stripped bare and occupied by an enemy army – was a serious matter.

“I – please state your name – hereby affirm...” Floyd begins.

“I, Abraham Woodhull, hereby affirm...” Woodhull echoes.

“...My loyalty to King George III, the British Empire and her laws...” Floyd continues.

“...My loyalty to King George III, the British Empire and her laws...” Woodhull repeats.

“...And furthermore, reject the false authority of the Continental Congress...”

“...And furthermore, reject the false authority of the Continental Congress...”

“...So help me God,” Floyd finishes.

“...So help me God,” Woodhull concludes. *And may God forgive me.* He thinks to himself.

“Excellent, now just sign your name here,” Floyd points to the bottom of the list and taps with his finger. He unscrews an inkbottle and presents Abraham with a quill pen. Briefly scanning down the list, he sees most of his neighbors have already signed.

Abraham hastily scrawls his name below the others and returns the pen to its inkwell.

“Thank you sir,” Woodhull nods appreciatively.

“You’ll be glad to be on the King’s side after the rebels are beaten, Abraham,” Floyd assures him.

Woodhull rejoins the crowd on the green, who seem both surprised, and relieved by his declaration.

“No one else? Right, off you go then,” Floyd dismissively waves off the group of colonists, who walk down across the green toward patriot rock, where Benjamin Tallmadge had unsuccessfully staged an attack on the Presbyterian church to retake Setauket the previous year. The townspeople were still picking musket balls out of the church siding.

The better part of the crowd thinned out by the far edge of the green, with some heading along the harbor down to Roe Tavern, or to their own farmhouse properties along the way. A handful more continues in the opposite direction with Woodhull toward Conscience bay, where a few sparse farmhouses span its west bank. As the group tapers off, Abraham finds himself left alone with a familiar face.

“Good evening, Abraham,” Nancy Strong says kindly. Abraham smiles and moves closer to her on the dirt road heading up to Little Neck.

“Hello!” He replies. “How have you and the family been?”

“We are getting by, all things considered. I must say I’m surprised to see you,” She replied with an inquisitive tone.

“Yes, well I am certain that the rebels in Connecticut have more to worry about than a small-time produce smuggler,” Abraham laughs.

“Having your freedom again must be a blessing,” Nancy comments.

“Speaking of which, Nancy, how is your husband? Have you made any headway trying to get *him* released?”

“It took some doing, but we know a handful of Tories in New York City. There are quite a few loyalists in my family. They were able to get Selah off the boat – for a price of course. He is in Connecticut for now. We still aren’t *together*, but thank the Lord

he is off that horrible prison ship. I've heard most die there," She explains. Abraham notices the worry in her eyes – shadows from lack of sleep beneath her lids.

"Well I am glad to hear he is safe," Abraham says. "If you don't mind me asking, why don't you join him? You could take the kids and go—"

"And surrender our land?" She cuts him off. "I've already been driven out of my own house. Damn redcoats tore up the whole property making to make 'fortifications.' They've made themselves right at home. The kids and I are living on the cottage by the water, right there." Nancy stops walking for a moment and points across the harbor to a tiny single story structure. From here, Abraham can see Nancy's laundry hung out to dry across the clothesline to the left of the house.

"You have no idea how hard it is to fit eight people in there, but I need all the children just to help maintain the farm. Everything has become absolutely exhausting since the war," she sighs.

"I take it your name isn't on that list with Colonel Floyd back there then?" Abraham asks, jabbing his thumb over his shoulder toward the Presbyterian Church, now far in the distance.

Nancy shakes her head. "How could I respect the authority of the British after all they've done to my family? To be honest Abraham, I was surprised you took the oath," Nancy admits, sounding disappointed.

"I would rather keep my head down, but there were a lot of rumors going around about me," Abraham explains, "From what I could tell, half the town thought I cut a deal with the rebels to get out of jail early. The last thing I want is for my neighbors to turn

against me, and the last thing any of us need is extra attention. If that is what it takes to be left alone, then that's what I'm going to do."

Abraham stops walking. They have arrived at the Woodhull property.

"Well, it was pleasant having the chance to catch up with you," Nancy says.

"Yes, I'm sure I will see you about town," Abraham replies.

"Surely, church this Sunday, yes?"

"Of course. I am relieved to hear about your husband. Stay in high hopes, I'm sure everything else will be resolved in time," he offers. Nancy waves, and continues down the long path around to the other side of the cove. Abraham takes a final look across the water to the Strong cottage, where he can just make out a three of Nancy's children taking down the wash from the clothesline, before starting up the path to his front door.

September 24th

Continental Army Camp

Hudson Valley, New York

Washington removes his hat and places it on a nail in the tent's main support brace. The tent is unfurnished save for the small table where Washington's maps are placed; the attendants have not finished offloading the wagons. General Scott stands beside Washington, arms folded and brow furrowed. He wrings his hands and massages his knuckles while he glares at the other two officers standing before them. Captains Rathburn and Leavenworth stand at a sloppy attention, sweat trickling from their grime-coated faces. Their uniforms are tattered and filthy.

Scott massages his temples and shakes his head.

“What *exactly* happened? He demands, struggling to keep his voice calm.

“We—” Leavenworth begins, but Rathburn cuts him off.

“I was sitting in the woods near riverbank,” Rathburn continues. He glances at Leavenworth who nods, and gestures for him to continue.

“I was sitting on the riverbank looking out at New York City, trying to count the ships in the British fleet but the count is different from the afternoon; something has changed...”

Something heavy and wooden bumps into a rock nearby, causing captain John Rathburn – a high-ranking intelligence agent under the command of General Scott – to freeze in place. Slowly, he puts down his spyglass and turns his attention to the shoreline

just in front of him, down a small bluff. A rowboat big enough for only two grinds against the silt at the water's edge. Rathburn watches noiselessly as a figure obscured by the shadows of the trees gets out of the boat and drags it onto the land nearby.

The man removes the oars from their locks, careful not to bang the hard wood on the gunwales, and slides them beneath the bench seat. From within the boat he removes a canvas cloth, unfurls it, and drapes the fabric over the boat. He gathers up a handful of leaves and twigs and places them on top of the covering, making the boat far more inconspicuous. The figure scans the shoreline before calling out in a whisper: "John?"

Rathburn hisses through his teeth, now trying to discretely get the other man's attention.

"Leavenworth!" he says as quietly as possible.

The man by the boat looks up toward the bank where Rathburn lies in wait amid the underbrush.

"John?" Leavenworth calls out again.

"Over here," Rathburn replies, "and keep your voice down!"

Leavenworth crouches and sneaks up through the bushes to Rathburn's vantage point. He then sits down in the cover provided by the leaves and low-hanging branches.

"What did you find?" Rathburn demands.

"Same as you said; one of their frigates is dry-docked for repairs. No combat damage this time, it just looks that they are replacing rotted wood that was damaged in the storm," Leavenworth recalls.

"How many ships did you count in the fleet, total?"

"Looks to me they have fourteen ships in port," Leavenworth answers.

“Hold on, how did you get fourteen?” Rathburn asks. “I counted differently.”

“I counted six 64-gunners, two 50-gunners, and six frigates – one of which is being repaired. But we know that the redcoats ought to have three 50-gunners from Brewster’s reports,” Leavenworth admits. “Is that what you’re on about?”

“No, when I was here this morning, I saw 18, three extra from the normal amount.” Rathburn explains.

Leavenworth thinks for a minute before letting out a groan: “Of course, the re-supply fleet!”

“We missed it?” Rathburn fumes.

“They must be using gun-ships to bring in the rations so that no one notices anything suspicious,” Leavenworth comments.

“We should have known better though; the Carlisle Commission was set to return to Britain today,” Rathburn reminds him.

“That’s right, I would’ve given all I have to see who signed their loyalty to the king,” Leavenworth scoffs. “Cowards, the whole lot of ‘em.” After a few moments of uncomfortable silence he ads, “we can’t do anything about the supply fleet now, except note the day.”

“How will that help?”

“We know when they’ll start running low on supplies, and then we can be ready for the next shipment,” Leavenworth says. “Presently, I believe we should be more concerned by the missing frigate.”

“Do you suspect they are preparing for an attack?” Rathburn asks.

“Perhaps. But I am not convinced we’ve seen enough movement to indicate anything quite so large scale: We’ve seen no moving of provisions or munitions, only regulars. They could be patrolling the sound, or bolstering their numbers at security checkpoints,” he speculates.

“I hope you are wrong – for our sake. We should begin making our way back. I don’t want to be caught out here at sunrise,” Rathburn says forcefully.

“What of the missing frigate?”

“General Scott has dispatched Butler, Parker, and Grayham to monitor enemy positions across Long Island. We can see how our findings compare to theirs when we return to camp,” Rathburn advises. Leavenworth nods.

As quietly as they are able, the two officers creep up the bank, leaving the hidden rowboat behind. After bushwhacking through the forest for a quarter of an hour, Rathburn and Leavenworth reach the road that will carry them far enough onto Long Island that British patrols from the New York stronghold will not find them.

As the path begins to slope upward to the crest of a slight knoll, Rathburn stops dead. He abruptly holds out his arm to stop Leavenworth, and points at the hilltop ahead. Leavenworth follows his partner’s gaze and manages to make out a faint flicker of light, just out of view. He points at the nearby tree line and gives Rathburn an inquisitive look. Rathburn nods, and the pair disappear again into the cover of the forest. The flicker of light glows brighter as it approaches the crest.

“...And that is exactly what I told him, but orders are orders,” a deep-voiced man says.

“Tell me, did he say why?” Another man inquires.

“Not officially, no,” the first man says, closer this time. The patrolmen walk into view, brightly lit by the lanterns they are carrying.

“What about off the record?” The second pries. The two rebel officers look at each other with raised eyebrows from their hiding place in the tree line, listening keenly. The first man stops walking, holds his lantern at eye level with his fellow Redcoat soldier and stares him down.

“Not a word of this to anyone.”

“Of course not.”

“Last night, a hand full of soldiers out in Huntington found someone sneaking ‘round the house where they were quartered. He got away, but they found him this morning hiding out in a barn.”

“An enemy spy?” The curious soldier asks.

“Looks that way,” the first soldier answers gruffly. “Word is, the man had a copy of his orders on his person when he was captured: a letter from his superior officer. It mentions four other rebel officers meant to be on Long Island, poking around. Captain thinks if we cast a wide enough net, we’ll catch the rest of them.”

“...After the two of them passed, Leavenworth and I knew we had to stay off the road. We pushed through the forest until we came over the hilltop,” Rathburn explains. “On the next hill, we could see a roadblock. The Redcoats had set up pikes in the road and a large battalion was standing around the blockade, holding lanterns and searching the woods surrounding the road.”

“We went deeper into the woods, almost got caught by a patrol in the forest *twice*. We had to lay face down in the mud beneath the bushes,” Leavenworth says. “After we escaped from Queens, we made camp right before sunrise, and laid low until we could find passage back to Connecticut.”

General Scott paces the dirt floor. “You two are the only officers to return,” he says, breaking the silence.

“We don’t know for sure,” Leavenworth interjects.

“Someone must have information!” Rathburn exclaims nervously.

“Yes; sources have been able to confirm that Butler, Grayham, and Parker, were captured and executed on September 12th, the same night you escaped,” Scott says before letting out a long, disappointed sigh.

Washington remains motionless, staring almost through the two officers.

“All for outdated information about the Cork Fleet!” Scott fumes, balling his hands into fists.

“Sir, cutting off the British supply fleet could be a major development for us,” Leavenworth says.

“It would be, but we would need to know how many resources come in on each shipment so that we could properly estimate when the British army is running low,” Scott replies. “And for that we—”

Washington steps forward and puts out a hand to silence Scott. “That is enough. Captain Rathburn, Captain Leavenworth, well done. Leave us and get some rest,” Washington dismisses the officers.

“Yes sir,” They reply in unison, saluting. They hastily skirt out of the tent, so quickly they collide with the attendant who is on his way inside.

“Sir, letters for you, I—is this a bad time?” The attendant asks.

“Wait outside, please,” Washington orders.

“What do you hope to accomplish by raking your only two surviving operatives over the coals?” Washington demands. “They did their job.”

“Three people died, sir,” General Scott says.

“Those people died because of poor planning, *General*. An altogether uncoordinated mission in the thick of enemy controlled territory? I am shocked even *two* made it back alive,” Washington scoffs.

General Scott hangs his head.

“Clement, are you still out there?” Washington calls out to his assistant.

The attendant hurriedly enters. “Yes, sir,” Clement stammers.

“Go and get Major Tallmadge for me, please,” Washington asks.

“Sir—” Scott begins.

“General Scott, we have tried your methods for months with low success, and high casualties. If we continue at this rate, we will be defeated,” Washington says, now agitated.

“I’ll fetch him for you, sir,” Clement says meekly, before ducking beneath the canvas flap out into the warm September evening air.

October 11th

Little Neck, Setauket Long Island

New York

“I expect the floor to be swept, wash done, and stove lit by the time I return,” Nancy calls over her shoulder to her flock of children. They had presently been tending to the small plot of farmland that the Strong family had been left with after occupying troops had seized the bulk of their acreage.

She is met with mixed calls of; “Certainly,” “Yes mother,” “It will be done,” and “Of course.” Smiling to herself, Nancy quickly scans through the woven basket of produce she is bringing into town to sell, making sure she has brought a sufficient amount to afford enough meat and eggs to meet her family’s needs. Satisfied, she begins walking. Nancy reaches the front of her property and turns onto the dirt path, passing a neat row of flowers and bushes.

“Nancy!” A voice hisses urgently from between a pitch pine and a dogwood.

“Oh, good God!” Nancy exclaims, dropping the basket in shock. “Who—?”

“It’s alright, only me,” Caleb says, emerging from the flowerbed. He brushes off a few petals and pine needles, wiping sap from his hands on his already muddy breeches.

“What are you doing here, Caleb? It can’t be safe! I have redcoats all over my property, Setauket is infested with them,” Nancy rambles. Her eyes dart back and forth, as if any second a British soldier would appear, and spot Caleb.

“Good to see you too,” Caleb smiles. He stretches his arms behind his back and shakes out his legs. “I was beginning to think you’d never walk by.”

“You *can't* be here, the British know you're working with,” Nancy drops her voice to a whisper, “*Washington.*” Without taking her eyes off Caleb, she stoops down to gather up the items she dropped.

Caleb nods.

“Precisely why I prefer traveling at night; much harder to recognize faces,” he replies, knowingly. “On this occasion, sadly, I did not have the time to wait. I'm here on most urgent business.”

“I had assumed this was no social call,” Nancy says.

“I have a message to give Abraham, and I must deliver it in person,” Caleb elaborates.

Nancy looks perplexed. “Why not hide in his garden then?”

“I stopped by already – actually cut through his estate to get here – he was not at home. And I can't just walk into town; then I'll definitely be spotted,” he explains. “No, I need you to find him for me and set up a meeting.”

“I can talk to him when I see him at mass and—”

Caleb shakes his head; “No, no, no, Nancy I need to see him *tonight*, I have orders to keep.”

Nancy looks hesitant.

“I understand if you don't want to get wrapped up in all this, but I'm asking you as a long time friend, please talk to Abraham *today*,” Caleb pleads.

Nancy lets out a defeated sigh; “All right, I will try to find Abraham, and see if I can get him to see you. Where did you want to meet?”

Caleb thinks for a moment, scratching at his sideburns. “My men have anchored just passed Old Field Point, I can come ashore, row through the narrows, and meet me by the rock on the shore of Conscience Bay. Abraham will know the place,” he assures her.

“I will try my best to find him, Caleb,” Nancy promises. “But please be careful. My family is already under such scrutiny, I cannot afford to have a known rebel caught by my cottage!”

“Of course. You know I wouldn’t drag you into this unless I had to,” he says.

“Not just for my sake, but for your own, Caleb; none of us want to see you hanged on the village green.”

Caleb places his arm on Nancy’s shoulder. “I truly am moved by your concern. Thank you,” he replies. The corner of his mouth twitches briefly into a smile. He drops his arm back to his side. “I should be going, it was good to see you Nancy,” Caleb begins to turn away from Nancy, but she holds her hand out to stop him.

“How do you plan on getting out of here? Little neck is absolutely brimming with the Redcoats. You won’t be hiding in the thistle until sunset, will you?” She asks.

Caleb shakes his head. “My crew is waiting for me with a rowboat in a small cove off Setauket Harbor – well hidden of course – beyond the usual patrol routes. I will be fine,” he assures her. “Now, I *must* be going.” Caleb nods politely to Nancy.

Both turn and head off toward their destinations; Nancy, North along the path around Little Bay, Caleb, South toward the waterline. After a few paces, Nancy turns to look over her shoulder, just in time to see Caleb’s torso disappearing into the high grass and cattails by the water’s edge. A gust of wind stirs up the stalks and reeds, concealing

Caleb completely. Nancy turns back to the path ahead and presses on toward town, past her wash line, still billowing in the breeze.

Roe Tavern,

Setauket, New York

Austin Roe stands smiling behind the bar, dishrag draped over his shoulder; the tavern is packed and the volume is at a dull roar. Many clashing conversations and outbursts of laughter blur together into incomprehensible murmur of white noise. The few tables are all crammed with extra chairs with more still leaning over shoulders and reaching out to join the conversations.

Sitting near the corner of the room, at the end of the bar is Abraham Woodhull. He rests at the fringes of a large conversation, occasionally interjecting to say his piece before returning his attention to the beer before him. He appears in good spirits.

“Setauket seems to be warming up to you again, Abraham,” Austin says, beaming. He lingers by his friend while he dries a spot on the cedar surface.

Abraham laughs; “All I had to do was swear my servitude to the king to regain the trust of my neighbors.”

“To be honest, you surprised me,” Austin admits.

“How so?”

“I’ve never known you to take sides so publicly,” Austin shrugs.

“I just want to be left alone. This town is not kind to rebels. You understand,” Abraham casts a quick glance to a handful of Red Coats chatting in the opposite corner. Austin nods knowingly.

Abraham drains his glass.

“Another, Abraham?”

“Please.”

Austin dexterously sweeps up the glass, opens the tap, snatches a two pence tip from another patron, and returns to Abraham with the full pint – all without spilling a drop.

“Thank you,” Abraham says appreciatively. Then, looking around the room, “Business seems to be going well, Austin.”

Roe takes a little half bow and then shrugs. “What can I say? This conflict has everyone worried. I suppose having a place to unwind helps,” he reasons.

Another patron waves to Austin and knocks his empty glass on the bar. Austin takes it and brings it back to the tap. He flicks open the valve and a few drops of ale trickle out before the flow is cut off. Austin lifts up the cask to pour out the remainder before handing the half-filled mug back to the patron.

“The trouble is, Abraham, I’m going through supplies twice as quick as usual. I find myself making a trip to New York City once a week – sometimes more,” Austin Chuckles. “I have to switch this out, I’ll be back!” Austin lifts the empty cask off the shelf and carries it into the back room. Abraham is left alone again amid the raucous crowd.

The chair beside him scrapes across the floor.

“Good evening, Abraham,” Nancy says, sliding onto the chair.

“Nancy? I wasn’t expecting to see you here,” he comments. Then: “I believe Austin will be back shortly – he’s fetching more beer.”

Nancy leans toward Abraham. “I’m not here for a drink, I need to talk to you.” Abraham pauses, mug halfway to his mouth. Without moving his head, he shifts his eyes to the soldiers in the corner. They are still chatting, disengaged from the rest of the patrons. “Here?” Abraham whispers. “Do you want to step outside?”

“No, it’s loud in here; we’re less likely to be overheard,” she reasons.

“What is it?”

“Caleb is here,” she explains. “Not in the tavern,” she clarifies, “but off shore with his crew. He wants to meet.”

“When?”

“Tonight. It sounded urgent,” Nancy says.

“Did he say what he wanted?”

“No, he was being very secretive,” she answers.

Abraham groans.

“I take it then, that you do know?” Nancy raises an eyebrow.

“I have a general idea.”

Nancy looks forward and throws up her hands. She opens her eyes wide and exhales sharply. “What *are* you involved with?” She demands.

“I don’t want you to get dragged into this too,” Abraham tells her.

“You’re too late for that! I had Caleb hiding in my bushes, now I’m carrying *messages* for you. At the very least, you could tell me what I’m *already* involved with,”

Nancy fumes. Calming down, she quickly glances over her shoulder to make sure no one has overheard.

“Fine, but not here,” Abraham jerks his head toward the party of Redcoats.

“Where am I meeting Caleb?”

“He mentioned a rock by Conscience Bay, he said you’d—”

“Yes, I know the place,” Abraham nods. He finishes his drink and places the glass on the bar. He slides off the stool. “I’ll square my debt with Roe later.”

“Wait!” Nancy stands as well. “Take me with you. You said you’d explain; you might as well just show me,” she pleads. Abraham hesitates for a moment before caving in.

“Alright. But not a *word* of this to anyone.”

“Of course.”

“Don’t leave yet,” Abraham orders. “Wait a few minutes, talk to Roe when he gets back, and meet me at my house at dusk.

Nancy nods, and turns back to the bar.

“Goodbye,” Abraham work his way through the crowd, pausing to briefly bid a few friendly neighbors farewell. He then slips out into the breezy late afternoon, a few rays of sunlight creeping in through the open door.

After a few minutes of Nancy drumming her fingertips on the bar, and a general sense of impatience among the other patrons, Austin returns holding a fresh cask under one arm. He places it on the sturdy shelf behind the bar, waves to acknowledge Nancy and holds up a finger to acknowledge that he will be with her shortly. After tending to the remaining customers, he returns.

“Good evening, Nancy,” he smiles. “The usual?”

“Please.” She slams her payment on the bar, harder than she intended. It rattles a few nearby glasses.

“You alright?” Austin asks, as he presents her with a drink.

“Just a long day, that’s all,” she answers.

“Nancy, please. Every day is a long day for us now. Something’s eating at you, what is it?” Austin pries. She doesn’t answer immediately, but taps on the bar absent-mindedly. She eventually deflects the question.

“Abraham had to leave, by the way. He said he’d square his debt with you later,” she says.

“Are you worried about him too?” He asks.

“Whom?”

“Abraham. Hasn’t been himself lately,” Austin frowns.

“How do you mean?”

“Oh come off it, you must’ve noticed. He’s jumpy, *much* more social than usual. It’s like he’s trying *too* hard to be normal,” Austin explains.

“Maybe he’s still getting used to being home. Selah was a wreck when we got *him* off the prison ship. I don’t have to imagine what that can do to you,” Nancy says, not wanting to mention Abraham’s meeting.

“Well either way, Nancy, try to relax, we’ve all got enough to concern ourselves with to start, I suppose,” Austin pats her hand.

“Thank you,” Nancy smiles, and sips her drink.

“I have to tend to the others, you take care now,” Austin says before leaving Nancy to her thoughts again.

**Conscience Bay
Setauket, New York**

There is a loud splash, breaking the silence on the water.

“Who did that? The water is freezing!”

“For the last time, feather the oars!”

“I can’t when you keep shaking the boat!”

“Keeping it level is *harder* when there’s no light!”

“We can’t exactly row in during the day!”

“Lantern wouldn’t hurt!”

“Lantern would give us away!”

“Quiet!” Caleb growls. “We’re rounding the tip of Little Neck, and based on what I’ve heard, the place is teeming with Redcoats.”

The crew nod and whisper affirmatives to confirm they understand Caleb’s instructions.

Shafts of moonlight pour down from between clouds, illuminating portions of the bend leading into the mouth of the bay. In the distance, at the tip of Little Neck, Caleb can just make out candlelight flickering in the windows of the Strong manor house, now completely overrun by the British. Outside and a few hundred paces inland is a large fire at the center of a semi-circle of tents. A small contingent of regulars sit by the fire,

looking out at the water and keeping watch while the others likely sleep in the tents, or inside the house.

“Hold!” Caleb whispers, almost inaudibly. “Gunwale the oars, drift!”

The crew holds their collective breath while they float past the lookout point, coasting noiselessly. The deckhand has guided the boat as far away from the camp as possible, but the waterway is narrow, and the tiny whaling chase boat still must come within less than 500 feet of the watchmen – close enough to overhear the guards speaking.

“...Haven’t heard? Oh, General Clinton is Furious. He’s sending word home hoping that we can stop the scoundrels!” One of the men sitting by the fire is saying.

“I heard the same. My cousin is stationed in the New York docks, said the flour is mixed with sand,” adds another.

“Aye, and stones with the meat – for weight,” confirms the first soldier.

“It must take them bloody ages to separate it all!” A third man standing by one of the tents interjects.

“Never mind that,” says the second soldier, “The rations are coming up short, we’re pressed for food...” But this is all Caleb manages to make out before a breeze kicks up, rustling leaves and obfuscating the conversation. Fortunately, the wind is with the small craft, pushing it well passed the guard post and into Conscience Bay.

“Well done,” Caleb praises the group softly. “Gentle strokes, bring us in over there.” Caleb points off to the distant shoreline near the far end of the body of water.

“Aye sir,” the Deckhand whispers from the stern, where he is steering the boat with a small paddle. The bay goes far inland, and opens up wide beyond the bottleneck

channel. It stretches from the northernmost tip of the neck, down to the Setauket mill, near the schoolhouse. Although it is further across than Setauket Harbor, the place is shallow and overgrown with algae and grass stalks, making it nearly useless for docking – but secluded from onlookers. Few houses border the bay, and the ones that do are set back and overgrown. Slightly further ahead, the bay narrows.

“Pull in here,” Caleb points to a particularly tall patch of grass that has grown out into the brackish water.

“Yes sir,” the deck hand replies. The crew takes a few more powerful strokes before lifting their oars as the boat glides up into the silt shoreline. Caleb jumps out onto the narrow beach. He grips the bow of the boat with both hands and pulls, dragging it further out of the water. The crewmembers step out to help, and with some effort, they manage to hide the boat in a thicket of overgrown bushes.

“One of you, set up a watchman over there, in case the Redcoats send out a patrol,” Caleb orders. “The rest of you, stay near the boat, we may need to leave in a hurry.”

“I’ll go,” one volunteers.

“Take Alden with you. Better to stick in groups,” Caleb advises. “Find a good vantage point on the hill but stay within sight of the boat. I shouldn’t be long,” he promises.

“Yes sir,” the crew replies in near unison.

Conscience Bay Meeting Rock

Setauket, New York

After a short walk south down the shoreline, a tall pine tree looms into view. Beneath the shadow of the tree is a large, smooth rock that slopes at almost a perfect 45-degree angle – about five feet tall at its highest point. And leaning against the rock, amid the tree’s gnarled roots, waits Abraham Woodhull.

“Good to see you, Caleb,” Abraham says, grinning. He approaches his friend with a handshake, but Caleb pulls him in for a one armed hug.

“This damned war has been keeping me away for too long,” Caleb frowns. “But I’m pleased to see you too – if not in better times. We— Abraham! What is *she* doing here?” Caleb has spotted Nancy, standing back from the conversation in the long shadow cast by the boulder.

“I brought her along; it seemed like the fair thing to do,” Abraham reasons.

“Forget fairness, what about your orders? What about keeping as many people *out* of this as possible? Wash—,” Caleb lowers his voice, “Washington doesn’t want me telling my crew what we’re doing. Now they may have their own guesses, but this is *knowingly* committing treason!”

“How would that be any different from now?” Nancy demands. “Caleb, you jumped out of my *garden*, anyone could have seen you. Do you truly believe that – as far as the British are concerned – there is any difference between unwittingly helping you, and *actually* knowing what you are engaged in?”

Caleb shakes his head. “So be it.”

“What was it that you wanted to see me about? As Nancy explains, the matter seemed quite urgent?” Abraham inquires. Caleb nods.

“Yes. I don’t know too much of the details, but there have been some conflicts higher up in the chain of command. All I can say for sure is that General Washington is eager for you to start, erm, tapping into your connections, so to speak,” Caleb explains.

“In New York City?” Abraham asks.

“Aye. From what Benjamin tells me, that is Washington’s blind spot. We need information, Abraham. The Continental army has moved closer to the British fortifications to pin down the bigger part of their army, but without intelligence, they cannot take any more ground,” Caleb elaborates.

“How exactly am I supposed to get the information to Washington?”

“You won’t, well, not directly,” Caleb clarifies. “Benjamin will be looking over your letters, and writing reports of the most *important* information. You will not be in direct contact with the General.”

“Well, you’re left with the same problem then, aren’t you? This isn’t a matter you can just trust a courier with – I suspect the Redcoats are rifling through all the mail they can get their hands on,” Nancy points out.

“Exactly. That’s why I will be delivering the letters personally, from Setauket to Connecticut. Once I am in friendly territory, the transfer should go smoothly,” Caleb says.

“Hold on, that would mean *you* would have to sneak into Setauket fairly regularly, don’t you think that’s a bit of an excessive risk?” Abraham interrupts. Caleb

opens his mouth, and then closes it again. He wipes his brow and scratches at his hairline, contemplating a solution.

“I can see out past the harbor from the cottage,” Nancy breaks the silence. “Caleb, if you anchor out past the mouth of the Harbor, you could signal to me, maybe with a lantern, that you’ve come to pick up Abraham’s letters.”

“Would that work?” Abraham asks.

“It might. From what I saw on our way into the bay, the Manor house is pretty far north, they might not have any visibility of the harbor at all,” Caleb recalls. “The cottage might provide a different vantage point.”

“Then what? Will Nancy have to come find me every time you make port?”

“That’s still better than *Caleb* having to walk through town looking for you; I’m not wanted by the Redcoats,” Nancy says.

“Changing the meeting spot might be helpful too. That way even if the British catch on, they won’t know to expect us ‘ere, or somewhere else up and down the harbor,” Caleb advises. The other two nod in agreement.

“I don’t know how much thought we can put into that *now*. Why don’t you and your men look over your charts, and pick a few places that are easy to get in and out of in a hurry, but secluded enough that we can meet in private,” Abraham suggests. “We would have to meet here again next time, but after that you can tell us where the other meeting places are, and work out a way to signal that to Nancy from your ship.”

“This seems agreeable,” Nancy consents. “What about my wash-line?”

“What about it?” Abraham asks.

“You can see it pretty clearly from your house – I noticed when I came over to meet you. I could hang a black petticoat when Caleb is prepared to come take your letters to Benjamin. We could arrange a handful of meeting spots, and number them. Then I could put out a certain number of handkerchiefs to let you know which spot to meet at,” Nancy suggests.

“I think we can make this work,” Caleb agrees.

“Is that all then?” Abraham asks.

“Before I leave you, I have some instructions for you, from Benjamin.”

“Alright.”

“Benjamin, excuse me, Major Tallmadge, does not want *any* information about troop numbers. He says they are notoriously difficult to estimate. What’s more important is supply status. Are they running low on food, firewood, and lumber for ships? Do they need more ammunition, is anything broken?” Caleb explains.

“Understood: No troop numbers, focus on supplies.”

“Exactly. *But*, Major Tallmadge also said if you find anything about troop *movements*, a surprise attack, military exercise, increased security in Queens, for instance, to let him know and return that information as quickly as possible,” Caleb adds.

“Alright; I’ll try to learn what I can, but, how do you want me to bring the information back? I don’t want to go the way of Hale and get caught holding incriminating documents...” Abraham trails off.

“Tallmadge has thought about this too,” Caleb says. “Matter of fact, that’s the *main* reason I had to speak with you in person.” Caleb reaches into his pocket and produces a wrinkled looking, poorly bound book, small enough to conceal easily.

“What is this?” Woodhull asks, thumbing through the pages. Nancy looks over his shoulder.

“Most of it is blank,” she comments.

“This isn’t the *finished* version,” Caleb explains.

The pages that are written on contain two columns, separated by a thin black line. The left column is a list of numbers and the right is corresponding words.

“Code?” Abraham asks plainly.

“Benjamin—the major, Tallmadge, you know, he is working on a system to keep you safe, starting with the more *incriminating* words, and moving to other names and places.”

“I swap those words out for the code numbers? Wouldn’t that still appear suspicious if I were caught?” Abraham demands.

“Perhaps. But at the very least, you will be protecting the identities of the other agents,” Caleb concedes.

Abraham swallows forcefully, and wrings his hands.

“I wasn’t expecting all this,” he stammers.

“Have you done it?” Nancy asks. “Field work, I mean. You never mentioned how *you* got pulled in.”

“I wasn’t drafted or *conscripted* if that’s what you mean,” Caleb says. “I was in a position to get information about the British fleet; I offered my help to Washington.”

“What was it like?” Abraham asks. Caleb considers the question carefully.

“Honestly, it was terrifying,” Caleb admits. “The most important thing to remember is to keep your head on your shoulders. As long as you believe your own story,

you will be fine. You are just going to visit your sister and brother in law for a few days, right?”

Abraham nods. “But what if I’m questioned or captured?”

Caleb shrugs. “According to Benjamin—” he pauses for a second, about to correct himself, but decides against it. “—According to *Benjamin*, every agent who has been caught has been found with stolen maps or letters. Stay away from that, keep to the code, and I’m sure you’ll be fine.” Caleb casts a concerned glance over his shoulder in the direction of his boat.

“I am sorry, Abraham, but I must be going. I need to be in Connecticut by morning,” Caleb says. “I’ll be back in a few days.”

“Goodbye, Caleb,” Nancy waves.

“Goodbye,” Abraham says, forcing a nervous smile. Caleb waves back to the pair, and backs away into the beach grass along the coast. Nancy and Abraham stay by the rock for a few moments, long enough to see the moonlit silhouette of Caleb’s whaling boat gliding across the bay, off into the darkness.

“We should be going,” Nancy urges.

“Right.”

The two step back onto the trail to the Woodhull property.

“Do you think he’ll get back all right?” Abraham asks, breaking the silence.

Nancy nods confidently: “I’m sure of it. He somehow managed to get from my yard and out of the harbor in broad daylight; he’ll be fine under cover of darkness.” She pauses for a minute, then stops walking. “Do you think *you’ll* be all right?” She asks

Abraham. He stops too, and briefly looks back on the path to their meeting place. Its opening is almost completely hidden by overgrown underbrush.

“I think so,” he eventually says, and begins walking again. Then: “I want to do this, Nancy. Benjamin asked me to help, in exchange for negotiating my release—”

“The rumors *were* true then?” Nancy asks.

Abraham nods. “But of course there is more. We’ve all been affected. I’ve lost family, Setauket has been torn apart, your family...” He trails off. “The point is, I want to help... I just don’t know how it comes so easily to Caleb.”

Nancy bites her lip.

“That isn’t who you are,” she says. “Those two have always been a bit *headstrong*. When it came time to enlist, they never cared about being called traitors or rebels. And you aren’t unsympathetic, but you don’t like being branded either. You’ve always opted to be more neutral, and that will make you all the better at the task at hand,” Nancy assures him.

The corners of Abraham’s mouth briefly twitch into a smile before a crestfallen look returns to his face.

Nancy and Abraham have reached the edge of the thicket on the west end of the Woodhull property, and come to an open clearing where the animals graze. Illuminated by the starlight, the grass is light purple.

“Thank you, Nancy.”

“And if you need help—”

“I—”

“—And do *not* start in saying you’d rather keep me from getting involved, now is a little late for that. I *am* a part of this now,” she says forcefully, cutting across Abraham.

“If you need real help, ask.”

They have reached the Woodhull home, and can make out the twinkling lights of Nancy’s cottage from across bay, reflecting off the now calm surface of the water.

“If I need you, I know where to find you,” Abraham closes his eyes, and nods.

“This is where I leave you. I expect you’ll be making preparations for your trip. Goodnight,” Nancy says.

“Goodnight.” She turns away from him and starts on the dirt path home.

October 18th

Road To New York City, New York

Rain falls in sheets, muddying the road and halving visibility of the horizon. Yet dutifully, a pair of regulars attends their post at the checkpoint. They stare ahead, quietly shivering and pulling their wool coats about themselves tightly.

“You see that?” One points at the path far in the distance amid the trees. The second soldier squints and strains his eyes in an effort to see past the driving rain. A shadowy silhouette approaches on horseback, moving at a decent clip.

“Do we have to stop him?” the second soldier questions. “It’s cold and I’ve just warmed my hands.” The pair snickers and ultimately steps forward. The first soldier holds up his hand and waves to the rider.

“Stop over here, please.”

The man pulls back on the reigns, slowing the horse to a trot as he nears the checkpoint.

“Afternoon,” the second soldier calls. “Could you dismount?”

“Tie your horse to the pole,” the first commands.

The man dismounts, splashing up mud on the soldiers.

“What is your name?” The first man demands.

“Abraham Woodhull, sir.” Abraham loops the reigns around the poll beside the turnpike.

“And what is your business in New York City, Mr. Woodhull?”

“To visit my family.”

“What family?”

“My sister, and her brother-in-law.”

“Could you be a little more specific?”

“Certainly. Their names are Mary and Amos Underhill. They own a small boarding house. I can give you the exact address if necessary – I’ve written it down *somewhere*.” He pats himself down.

“That won’t be necessary,” the second guard assures him. “But we will have to search you, I’m afraid.”

Woodhull scoffs, “And what do you expect to find?”

The first guard has already moved to Abraham’s horse and is carelessly rifling through the saddlebags.

“The rebels have stooped to sending *spies* to steal intelligence from within the city. The general netted a few of the rogues, and ordered highway patrols be on alert ever since,” the second soldier explains.

“That is *most* unfortunate,” Abraham comments.

The second guard conducts his own pat down, and gestures for Abraham to turn out his pockets. He produces a few coins, a letter from his sister, and a few scraps of parchment.

“Thank you,” the guard nods.

“Saddle bags are clean too,” the first soldier calls.

“Alright, Mr. Woodhull, you’re free to carry on.”

Abraham unties and mounts his horse. The guards open the turnpike.

“A word of advice, Mr. Woodhull,” the first guard offers, leaning in toward the horse. “Try no to wander. Things are tense as it is between soldiers and residents, as you can well imagine. Everyone wants this to end as soon as possible – but it’s best to keep your head down.”

Abraham nods solemnly. “I will be sure to keep that in mind, sir.” He flicks the reigns and spurs the horse with his heels, leaving the regulars in splashes of mud and rainwater.

**Underhill Boarding House
New York, New York**

The ground floor of the boarding house is empty, save for Amos and Mary Underhill. Amos sweeps up dirt that a resident has tracked in near the stairway to the second floor, and the bedrooms. Mary stokes the fire, and moves a few damp coats from a rack by the door to a place closer to the flames, where they can dry.

Water drips in infrequent trickles through a leak in the roof.

“I wish we’d fixed that this summer,” Mary shakes her head.

“Nothing we can do now.” Amos slides a wooden pail beneath the leak to catch the drips. The room falls silent; accept for the competing sound of the drips and the crackling hearth. The silence is broken by a knock at the door, loud enough to rattle the frame.

“I’ll get it,” Mary says. She steps around the small puddle that had started to form, and weaves between the tables. The knocking intensifies as Mary reaches for the latch, pulling the door open.

“What do you—” She stops. “Abraham!” Mary pulls her brother inside and hastily shuts the door before the pelting rain can blow inside. Abraham has been soaked to the skin, and has left a trail of mud from the doorway to where he now stands. Noticing this, he hastily wipes his feet.

“Good to see you,” Amos claps his brother-in-law on the shoulder warmly, producing a wet *thwap* noise. Amos withdraws his hand. “Let’s get you by the fire, eh?”

“Thank you,” Abraham says gratefully, between clenched teeth. Mary pulls up a chair for him. He drops into the seat, exhausted and shivering.

“I left my horse in the stable out back I hope that’s alright,” He adds.

“Course. You can go out and get your things when the storm lets up.” Amos assures him. He casts a quick glance to the still dripping leak. Abraham nods again.

“It’s so good to see you. I got your letter, but I wasn’t expecting you for another day or so,” Mary remarks.

“Terribly sorry – I hope I’m not imposing, but it’s difficult to have exact travel plans and keep things going well at home. I have to make accommodations for mother and father.

“Oh, how have they been?” Mary asks. “I’ve been meaning to visit but Amos and I find it so hard to get away from the boarding house...”

Abraham waves his hand. “Not worth the trip right now: I had to pass four British checkpoints on the way here and half of Setauket is quartering troops. You know they

damn near tore apart the church making a stable? But mother and Father send their love all the same.”

“That’s terrible. The troops do come here often as well,” Mary comments. “And how are you? We heard you got in a spot of trouble with the rebels.”

“Nothing serious. Smuggling, you know, stayed for a few months and was turned loose when they realized they had bigger problems.” Abraham casts a suspicious look to the balcony and second floor above. “Are you quartering any troops?” He asks cautiously.

Amos nods. “A handful. A few more that live in the barracks down the street come ‘ere for a warm meal and a drink now ‘n again.”

“More than that,” Mary corrects him. “We’ve become somewhat of a loyalist establishment,” She explains.

“Not by choice, mind you; they scare off damn near everyone else,” Amos scowls.

“We still have room for you though, Abraham.”

He smiles.

“Well I’m sure you’re exhausted. I have a few things to tend to before this evening, but we can talk more over dinner,” Mary says, smiling. She embraces Abraham warmly, and retreats upstairs.

“I’ll go grab your things, and leave you to dry out,” Amos chuckles.

“Much appreciated.”

October 19th

East River

New York, New York

The streets are packed with British troops; a group of three or more occupies nearly every street corner while patrols march through the streets. There is an air of discontent amongst everyone – not just the colonists but the soldiers as well.

“After all that, we still have sand in the bread,” one soldier complains.

“If I could return to Britain *today*, I would find that thieving supplier and wring his neck,” a second agrees.

“That just might be the first thing I do when I get back,” A third grumbles in agreement.

Abraham stands with his back against the boardinghouse door. The sun has only just started to dry the city from the previous day’s storm; there are still puddles everywhere. He looks up and down the street, completely overwhelmed. He has a legitimate reason to be here, and is still nervous. He can only imagine how much a wreck Nathan Hale would’ve been: alone and without a solid story.

Unsure of exactly *how* to gather information, but certain he won’t find any lurking on the side of the road, Abraham sets off into the city. He casually follows in the wake of one of the British patrols, careful to stick to crowds. He pauses frequently to admire the buildings along the sides of the street whenever one of the corner-watching regulars looks at him too closely. Abraham is a seasoned smuggler, well accustomed to blending in.

It didn't hurt that Abraham *physically* isn't anything special: he is a rather plain looking man of average stature. He doesn't draw many stares or glances.

After a few meandering minutes, Abraham can go no further. The guard patrol has marched directly into a shipyard, the entrance of which is guarded by officers. Unlike the regulars posted on the street corners, these men are alert: no chatting, eyes sharply scanning over all passers-by. On either side of the guards are hastily constructed barricades made from sharpened logs, buried on an angle in the ground. Beyond the fortifications, a large group of troops appear to be loading up their gear, putting on their packs, and falling into formation.

Curious, Woodhull backs away slightly and takes up a more hidden vantage point in a narrow alleyway. He watches as a reasonably sized contingent forms, and marches out of their makeshift fortress. Abraham finds himself starting to count off the number of troops, but remembers Tallmadge's instructions and stops. *No troop counts; the numbers are always inaccurate.* Instead, he turns his attention to what *equipment* they are bringing. A few wheel-carts bearing small cannons, and a wagon hastily packed with seemingly random cooking implements and food rations were dragged behind the troop formation. The whole spectacle is uncharacteristic for the British, who are normally well organized in everything from formation to packing and camp set up.

Nonetheless, Abraham watches discretely as the parade of troops marches past. The residents of the city hurriedly back up to the buildings of either side of the street to get out of the way of the advancing troops. Abraham makes mental notes of all he can – remembering that his ultimate downfall would likely be writing any of this information down – before slipping out of the opposite end of the alley.

He doubles back for a second look at the encampment now that many of the soldiers have left. He can't see far beyond the walls, but is able to make out a few rows of tents, cannons, and munitions, which have been left behind in a decidedly un-British fashion.

“Odd,” Abraham mutters under his breath.

He retreats back through the alleyway and onto the main street. The tail end of the marching army is disappearing around a street corner. Abraham hangs back and takes a slow meandering walk back to the boardinghouse. After a short walk, he arrives.

The building is nothing remarkable – a two story, bigger than average house with a sagging roof and weathered façade – but the location is incredible. The boardinghouse is a stone's throw away from the East River, looking across to Queens Borough. Few other buildings obstruct this view.

Roe Tavern

New York, New York

Abraham opens the door, and his heart stops: the first floor of the building is packed wall-to-wall with British soldiers. Before too much time passes, Amos crosses the room and saves Abraham from his frozen terror in the threshold.

“What's wrong?” he asks, not unkindly.

Abraham sweeps the room with his eyes, his gaze occasionally flitting back to Amos.

“Oh, don’t mind them,” Amos assures him. “As I said, this place has been quite popular amid the regulars. Business is business.”

“Do they ever make trouble for you?”

“Mostly no. Probably no more than any other in fact.” Then: “Where have you been Abraham?”

“I just went out for a walk.”

Amos frowns. “Just be careful not to ‘walk’ too close to any of the British outposts and garrisons. They’re liable to be suspicious of anyone wandering around secure locations.”

Abraham nods. “So I’ve heard.”

“Then sit down! You’re making *me* nervous!” Amos commands.

Abraham pulls up a chair to a nearly empty table in the back corner. Only upon his arrival did he realize it was not in fact empty, but occupied by one apparently drunk, slumped over soldier. Too late to turn around, Abraham pulls up a chair as quietly as possible, trying not to draw the gaze of the soldier.

“I know you?” The regular slurs. Abraham hesitates a moment before deciding the best course of action is probably to answer.

“I doubt it.” Keep it simple.

“I thought not. Don’t usually see many I *don’t* know in ‘ere.” The soldier bows his head and makes a lazy circle with his hand. “What brings you in?”

Tell the truth, you have business here, Abraham reminds himself.

“This place belongs to my sister and her husband,” he explains. Then: “I’m just visiting for a few days. I haven’t really seen much of them since the war broke out.”

“War?” The soldier laughs, “is that what they’re calling it?”

“What would you call it?” Abraham asks, amused. He relaxes a bit.

“Standoff, more like. See that band of rebels sitting up north o’ New York, they know they can’t march in here and fight us like gentleman ought to. They just waiting,” he explains.

“Then why doesn’t our general just go up there and wipe out the camp?”

Abraham questions.

“Can’t. Can’t leave the city. Traitor Washington and his band of boys will be praying we do though. We step out, and the damn French swarm over the city and knock us out. Then what little supplies we get from Europe stop coming and we’re dead in the water, stuck between two armies.”

“...And you can’t go and deal with the *French* army either, because then the rebels would do the same thing – push you out of Manhattan?” Abraham finishes.

“Exactly.”

“But I thought I saw troops marching out this afternoon,” Abraham says casually.

The regular waves his hand, as if shoosing an imaginary fly. “General Clinton likes to put on a show for the rebels; load a few wagons, march out of the city, then turn around and march right back,” the man chuckles. “If Washington has any of his *sneaky* officers spying on our city,” the soldier leans in, “they don’t know what to tell him. Can’t tell a real march from a fake show one.” Abraham’s stomach tightens.

The man laughs again, and Abraham feels his body relax once more. He hasn’t been made.

“Whatever it takes, I just want this damn war over,” Abraham comments.

“You and everyone of us in the British army. The suppliers back home are cheating us every chance we get.”

“So I’ve heard. Sand in the grain, rocks in the meat, right?” Abraham recalls. The soldier nods.

“We’ll make it to the next shipment…” Abraham considered asking him when that might be, but figured firstly that the man probably didn’t know, and secondly that it would raise too much suspicion. “...But we’ve ‘ad to ration. Might have to burn the walls of our fort come winter though. Don’t think we have enough lumber to keep warm otherwise.”

Abraham stood up, seeing the conversation would yield no more actionable intelligence.

“Enjoy your afternoon,” he waved. The soldier grunted in response.

October 29th

Washington's Quarters

Hudson Valley, New York

“General Washington?” Scott stuck his head inside his superior’s tent.

“Come in, get out of the rain, what do you need?” The general asks.

General Scott steps into the dusty tent and stands at parade rest before Washington, who looks over a handful of letters on his desk. Washington is so engrossed in the material before him that he hardly glances up to acknowledge Scott.

“I am here to offer my resignation, sir.” He holds out a sealed envelope to Washington, who does not immediately look up to take it. Frustrated, Scott steps forward and places his letter upon Washington’s desk. The general moves the letter away from the others and glances up from his work.

“Might I ask your reason?”

“It came to my attention that a few days ago, on the 22nd, Tallmadge was delivering you direct reports from his agent, Caleb Brewster, without my consultation.” Scott explains.

“Yes, upon which time Tallmadge made a complaint that there had been nearly half a dozen other letters which he received and delivered to you for review. At which time, you told him that the intelligence was not received, ‘Through the proper channel,’ and therefore you ‘did not give credit to it.’ Do you recall the conversation?” Washington reminds him.

Scott chews his lower lip a moment before deciding on a passably amicable response: “I do recall. But his intelligence could not be verified by any other agents, and I did not know if it could be trusted.” This was not entirely untrue. In fact, the reason Scott preferred sending out a handful of infiltrating agents was because each could gather his own information, which Scott could use to cross-check for accuracy.

“But such is the nature of a *chain* of agents. We can gather more substantial information at lower risk to our operatives, and we can *keep* gathering information over long periods of time,” Washington replies. “Do you have any other reasons?”

He did. “My spies are failing me, sir,” Scott says, embarrassed. He looks at the floor. “I was expecting an agent from New York to return with information – I hoped he could tell us if the King’s troops would receive more supplies in time for winter. But he knows nothing, and will not tell me anything at all.”

“That *is* problematic.”

“And to be honest, sir, I have been long away from home, and there are family matters I must attend to. I believe it would be best for everyone if I should leave the army in a few weeks time,” Scott concludes.

Washington mulls this over for a few minutes before replying, “Very well. You’ve served with honor, and your command has been a great help—” The tent flap rustles and Benjamin Tallmadge rushes inside, excited. As soon as he sees General Scott however, stops and stands near the exit, awkwardly.

“Major Tallmadge, come in, don’t linger in the corner,” Washington beckons. “General Scott and I were just finishing up here.” He nods to Scott, who offers a little

bow in response, before purposefully walking out of the tent. Washington draws his chair back from the table and turns his gaze to Benjamin, giving him his full attention.

“I hope I was not interrupting, I didn’t realize—”

“It’s alright. Major Scott just stopped by to offer his resignation.” Tallmadge looks dumbfounded.

“He’s leaving?”

Washington nods. “He seems to have found himself having trouble fulfilling his duties. I don’t think he much liked you delivering me intelligence directly, but Brewster’s reports have been more helpful than the information Scott’s agents have brought in as of late – which is to say *none*.

“I’ve been going over Woodhull’s first report, here, and I have to say that I’m a bit underwhelmed by his information. He’s confirmed that the roadblocks have tightened, as we expected. There’s some speculation in here about a troop movement out of the barracks, plans to travel to the West Indies, but even your agent recognizes in his letter that the British might be trying to bait us into the city. We can’t act on that. In fact the only bit of useful information in here is that the troops are nearly out of firewood. Firewood, Major Tallmadge.”

“Sir, what about the information about the fleet?”

“We already know about the Cork Fleet.”

“This time it’s late. There are some whispers, Benjamin says, of the King’s troops packing up and abandoning the city. They haven’t the supplies to maintain their garrison,” Tallmadge says hopefully.

Washington frowns. "I think that may be a bit too optimistic. The King would never allow such action. All the same, this sliver of information about their supplies is somewhat useful to me: a good *start*. But be sure to inform Woodhull that we need more tactical information if we are to win this war. I want to know what generals, garrisons, and battalions are there, and when they leave. What kinds of defenses are being built around Brooklyn and Long Island? That would be the most helpful." The general hesitates. "Tell Woodhull to keep his ears open for anything more about the fleet's delays. If they do leave, I want to be able to sweep in before reinforcements arrive."

"Of course, sir. I'm sure the quality of the reports will improve as Woodhull becomes more comfortable in his duties. His first time that deep into enemy territory, he's liable to be a bit paranoid. I know him better than anyone," Tallmadge assures him.

"I hope for all our sakes, you're right. With Scott gone, you are to lead all of these intelligence-gathering missions on your own, and you report directly to me. Understood?"

"Yes sir."

"Good. Dismissed," Washington orders. He draws his chair back into the table and goes back to reading the intelligence reports set before him.

October 31st

Underhill Boarding House

New York

“Again so soon?” Mary demands. “It’s not that I dislike seeing you, Abraham, but this is the second visit in a week.

“And I’m already beginning to regret it,” Abraham says. “Nothing against you, Mary, the checkpoints. The guards stopped me again, threatened me, and demanded my business in the city.”

“That’s awful,” Mary sympathizes.

“Just what is your business in the city?” Amos demands. Mary glares at him. “I’m not trying to be hard on him, I’m curious is all. If you wanted a longer visit why not just stay the time? Spend a week instead of a day? What are you *really* doing here?”

Abraham hesitates. “I, I’m afraid I cannot tell you my true business, as it is *my* business.”

“Abraham, you’re family, what can’t you tell me?” Mary demands, agitated.

“It’s not that I don’t want you, it’s—I would be putting you in danger if I told you, and enough people know already. The fewer who keep this secret, the safer we all are.”

“Are you smuggling again?” Amos inquires, “Because we’re not interested in reporting you to the rebels. We can’t take that much attention from the British right now.”

“I can assure you, that my days as a smuggler are long over,” Abraham chuckles. “I’m afraid it has to do with the British and that’s all I can say.”

Amos looks around the boardinghouse, empty in the early morning, before leaning in closer to the chair where Abraham is sitting. “You know, after what they did to us, ransacking our mill in Setauket, making us move out here, we’re no friends of the British. So if you’ve a quarrel with them, we’re the last people who would run to their aid.”

Abraham lets out a long sigh. “I am ordered to come here, and gather as much information on British operations in New York as I am able. Those were the terms of my early release from prison. At least, that’s what was *implied*.”

“Good lord,” Mary whispers.

“I don’t want you two to play any part in this, and I want to make sure that if I am caught, you know as little as possible to spare yourselves from trouble with the British. But I also understand if you don’t want me staying here and drawing attention.”

Amos shakes his head. “We are both on your side. You’re welcome to stay here, no questions asked, but…” He trails off.

“What?”

“I’m ashamed to ask this of my own brother,” Mary says, “but we’re going to have to charge you. All of our operating costs have risen significantly, with shipments getting delayed and supplies running short.”

“We can give you our best rate, £3 per week, and even then we’re barely breaking even,” Amos offers.

“We know you don’t have much either,” Mary acknowledges.

“It’s alright. I’m sure I will be reimbursed for my expenses anyway. I can pay. It’s the least I can do for putting you at such great risk.”

“Of course, we won’t say anything to no one,” Amos assures him with a pat on the shoulder.

“I appreciate that. Of course, I won’t always visit this frequently, but I needed to follow up on some information I heard about, last time I was here.” Abraham explains. “I don’t think I can afford to come so frequently anyway. The regulars at the checkpoints are bound to recognize me eventually, and then they’ll start asking why I’m here so often. I can’t have that.”

November 20th

Washington's Quarters

New York

“This is excellent news, Major Tallmadge,” Washington says eagerly. He lets the letter he has been reading fall to the table beside a small lantern, a quill, and an inkwell.

“Well, not in the strategic sense – we could have hoped for better – but the quality of this information is incredible.”

“I am glad you are pleased, sir,” Benjamin beams.

“Mr. Woodhull has certainly increased the effectiveness of his intelligence gathering; he has provided names of the commanders and infantry units in New York City. It is solid information and could lead to a few victories before we dig in for winter quarters,” Washington says. “I needed some good news.”

Benjamin raises his eyebrows quizzically. “Is there something troubling you?” Washington then would have dismissed most other officers, but Tallmadge was different. Their relationship was far less formal than the one Washington had maintained with others such as Charles Scott, treating Tallmadge as more of a friend than a follower.

“I have received some distressing news from one of my most trusted commanders from the southern campaign,” Washington says forlornly.

Tallmadge invites himself to sit down at the table opposite Washington, another informality not afforded to many other Majors. “General Greene, sir?”

Washington nods, “Greene wrote to me saying he has heard of morale problems among other officers, one in particular. Benedict Arnold has been associating far too often with Tories for Nathanael Greene’s liking.”

“Is it possible this is just idle gossip?” Benjamin questions. “Even so, Mr. Woodhull would seem to be a loyalist to an onlooker, yet he is helping the cause. Is it possible Benedict is doing the same; perhaps to become ingratiated with the local community to drum up support?”

“Ordinarily I might hope so, but Greene received a personal letter from Arnold. He complained bitterly about the state of the revolution – the economy, fighting in congress. It was apparently concern enough that Greene relayed the information to me. When I made him commander of Philadelphia, I did not expect him to be spreading loyalist sentiment,” Washington laments.

“Philadelphia already has many loyalists, kindling that flame is dangerous, even if it is only slight,” Benjamin comments.

“I agree. The issue I see is that to leave him in Philadelphia may, or may not, be damaging to the local opinion of our cause. But to punish him too severely could make him even more disheartened. Like it or not, Arnold is an excellent and charismatic commander. I want to use him to his potential, not demoted to some lowly post where he is of little use to the Continental army,” Washington reasons.

“This is true sir, especially with all the experience available among the ranks of the redcoats, we *are* in desperate need of good military leadership,” Benjamin says slowly. “Perhaps a lateral transfer? Not rewarding his sentiment, nor punishing his dissent, simply moving him from one station to another; perhaps where his tactical

experience will be well used, but where his influence over public opinion will be lessened?”

“My thoughts exactly, Major Tallmadge. It could appeal to Arnold, and let him know he is still a valued part of our army. But perhaps for now it would be best to leave things as they are. I will not jump into action based on hearsay, even from Greene,” Washington decides. “No, we will wait and see how this turns out. As for Mr. Woodhull, please tell him I am grateful for his most recent and useful report; I look forward to reading the next.”

“I am certain he will be glad to hear it, sir,” Benjamin says appreciatively. “I will see to it immediately.”

December 20th,

Continental Congress Meeting House

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

“...Nonetheless, we have not summoned you here to talk about *strategy*, General Arnold,” says John Hancock, from the long desk situated in the middle of the meeting hall. He grips the edges of the wood tabletop tensely as he looks over his notes. “Due to your recent injuries—” Hancock gestures to Benedict Arnold’s leg, which is still bound and wrapped.

Arnold cuts across him before he can continue: “You promoted me, yes; due to my injury. My station comes not from recognition of achievement, but of pity.” He speaks with a tone of disgust, contorting his face as if he had bitten into something sour and disagreeable. John shakes his head.

“Your *many* and *repeated* injuries did not play a role in your recognition, but again, this is not the reason you are here,” Hancock says. He drums his fingers on the edges of the desk, impatiently. He hesitates, as if unsure how to proceed, and becomes fixated on Arnold’s injured leg, which is noticeably shorter than his healthy one from being broken and set improperly on the battlefield. On the side of his chair leans a knobby walking stick. He is seated in the middle of the room, across the table from John, and surrounded by the congress’s other delegates. They all sit silently at their tables, waiting.

“You are here because of complaints from the Philadelphia citizens and local government that you have been extorting local citizens and abusing your military

oversight of the city for your own personal gain,” Hancock finally begins. Arnold mutters something under his breath. “Obviously, the Continental Congress is displeased to hear of such allegations.”

Now another member of the congress joins in: “We have also found several financial discrepancies with your record keeping, particularly during your northern campaigns,” says John Adams. “You owe a debt to the Continental Congress.”

Arnold is shocked; all the color drains from his face, as his knuckles whiten from gripping the arms of his wooden council room chair. “Debts?” He demands.

“Two thousand pounds, yes,” Adams says slowly, reading the number off of the page before him.

“That is ridiculous. My expenses were documented, but the paperwork was lost during the first retreat at the battle at Saratoga,” Arnold explains. “One cannot politely ask the British to halt their attack while one gathers up one’s things before retreating,” He explains with his most condescending tone.

“We wished to give you some time to recover before calling you forward,” Hancock says. “But as the congress is already pressed for money; we will soon have to print more of our own currency to pay for the war expenses. We need you to settle your debt with the Continental Congress with as much haste as possible.”

“This is gross injustice, John,” Arnold scoffs.

“You will *respect* this institution, and its president, Arnold,” Adams commands.

Arnold rolls his eyes. “*President* Hancock, I owe nothing. I have more pressing matters to attend to than be lectured by a brood of cowardly men who sit shut away, miles

from combat. Good day.” Arnold stands, grabs his walking cane, and hobbles out of the meeting room. He lets the door slam shut behind him.

“And Washington wishes to promote him?” Adams asks incredulously.

Benedict Arnold clenches his fists, frustrated as he walks down the hallway outside the meeting room, which connects the tiny council chamber to the city’s courtroom. Benedict halts to glance into the open door. The judge’s bench is unoccupied, as is the cage in the center of the room where the accused stand trial. No civilians linger along the rail that divides the public from the proceedings of the court; it is a quiet day in Philadelphia. Realizing he doesn’t want to be outside the meeting room, lest President Hancock decide to have him dragged back in – or even put him in the courtroom cage until he paid his alleged debts – Benedict shuffles out of the meetinghouse and down the steps, to the town square, where a number of residents are seated, talking, or passing through.

One man is neither talking nor waiting; but pacing near the end of the meetinghouse steps. When he hears the door slam shut behind Benedict, he looks up, delighted.

“Ah, Mr. Arnold,” he says cheerily, “How *did* your meeting go?”

“Not well, Joseph,” Benedict says. “The congress claims I am in debt to them. But I was *already* paying for the war effort out of pocket.” Joseph Stansbury contemplates this for a moment. First and foremost he is a businessman – one who managed to thrive under British occupation.

“Did you not keep a war-ledger?” Joseph asks.

“You mean expense reports? Yes. But they were lost in the first retreat at Saratoga, and now I cannot prove that it is Congress that owes *me* money,” Benedict says venomously.

“Surely you could just explain that there was no time to gather the notes in the retreat?”

“I tried, but was unsuccessful. They seem intent on building a case against me,” he complains. “All this after a few fellow officers stole my glory and I tell a friend in confidence that the war is taking its toll on business.”

“It has though, it certainly has,” Joseph agrees. “I know that I for one would be at a loss without your support. Which reminds me...” He trails off. Joseph Stansbury was one of a handful of Philadelphia merchants engaged in an under-the-table deal with Benedict Arnold. Arnold would use his position of command over the militia in Philadelphia to secure protection for war-related goods and provisions being shipped by a select few merchants. These merchants in turn would pay Arnold a security fee. The setup was not unheard of among other colonial leaders presiding over large areas. But this system was borderline extortion, and could lead to some unwanted trade across enemy lines; which congress very much wanted to stop. Unfortunately for Benedict Arnold, the local government was quick to call attention to his trade scheme, causing him to come under scrutiny.

“I can’t help you with imports again, Joseph,” Benedict shakes his head, “not for the near future anyway. Congress, among other things, has accused me of abusing my administrative powers. Can we continue this conversation whilst walking? My apologies, I have a social event to attend with the Shippen family.”

“Of course,” Joseph nods, and begins walking alongside Benedict Arnold, who is having some difficulty with his leg. He grunts every few steps. “Are you alright?”

“I will be fine eventually; my leg is still healing,” Benedict says.

“Tell me Mr. Arnold, still trying to court Judge Shippen’s daughter?” Joseph pries.

“I am not sure that is any of your business, Stansbury,” Benedict says defensively, temporarily taking up a far more formal tone.

“My apologies sir, only, my business depends on your protection. I ship powder, provisions, and war-related supplies. The Tories and the rebels alike never leave me alone,” Joseph complains. “I would hate to see you lose your station because of an entanglement with such a deeply loyalist family. Judge Shippen publicly supported the British occupation of Philadelphia; the whole family did business with them while the soldiers were here.”

“And you did not?” Simcoe inquires, already knowing the answer.

“I kept *my* business out of the public eye. Pursuing your infatuation with Peggy Shippen – or *any* loyalist for that matter – could hurt your reputation among your own soldiers,” Joseph reminds him. “Think of the profit you would stand to lose.”

“I prefer to think of this as an opportunity to begin healing the wounds,” Benedict explains. “I do not want the Tories to rally against me any more than the British Empire wants the Continental Congress to rally against *it*. I will not make the same mistake they did by alienating.”

“Are you sure that is your *only* reason?”

Benedict is quiet.

“You know, there are *other* ways to make money – if you cannot use your influence to protect merchants, there are other resources at your disposal that could be *very* lucrative,” Joseph suggests. Benedict stops walking and stares at Joseph menacingly.

“I am unsure of precisely what you are suggesting, but perhaps it would be best for you to keep such matters to yourself, particularly when we are out *in public*,”

Benedict hisses through clenched teeth. “Now if you’ll excuse me, I am due at the Shippen’s home shortly. I will be in contact with you, next time I have news regarding our business. Good day.”

Benedict hobbles away quickly, putting the majority of his weight on his makeshift crutch. Joseph stands in place, wringing his hands nervously.

Shippen Residence

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The Shippen house is far more luxurious than any of Setauket. The entrance to the building has a high-ceilinged foyer; beyond which are wide open doors leading to a spacious entertaining room. The walls are adorned with fine tapestries and ornately framed oil paintings. At the end of the room is a hearth, stoked to a comfortable and warmly crackling blaze. On either side of the entrance to the living room are twin staircases that sweep upward to the second floor of the house. An attendant guards the entrance of each stairway to prevent any curious guest who has forgotten their manners from exploring the rest of the home.

Everywhere between the front door and the fireplace is littered with servants, holding trays bearing cocktails for the guests, who – by the time Benedict enters – have already arrived in large numbers. He has swapped out his crude walking stick for a sleek and polished black cane, which was still abhorrent to him. Since his hearing, Benedict has removed his Continental Army uniform in favor of an upscale waistcoat, matching outer coat, and perfectly clean and pressed breeches. Whether he was consciously aware of it, he had not wanted to appear before his loyalist acquaintances in a rebel uniform.

Benedict scans the room and immediately picks Peggy Shippen out of the crowd. She is standing next to the fireplace wearing a cream colored gown with a silk cape about her shoulders. As he begins to walk toward Peggy, he notices that she is *not* the center of attention in the room; the highest quantity of guests seems to be clustered around her father, Judge Edward Shippen. Beside him are Peggy’s eldest sister, Elizabeth, and a man whom Benedict does not recognize. The crowd is laughing merrily. Benedict passes by the group and joins Peggy beside the fire. He leans his arm on the ledge above the fireplace to take the weight off his injured foot.

“Good evening, miss,” he says with a little bow.

“It is excellent to see you again so soon,” she beams.

“Could I have everyone’s attention for just a moment, please,” Judge Shippen calls out. The chatter that had been murmuring across the parlor quieted down so that only the crackling of the fire was audible. “Wonderful, thank you. Now as some of you may know, I have invited you all here tonight – friends, and esteemed members of the Philadelphia commonwealth – to share in some happy news.

“My daughter Elizabeth is to marry the good Colonel Edward Burd,” he announces. A smattering of polite applause breaks out. “Now if you would all join me; a toast to this happy union, and to their future prosperity.” The Judge raises his glass, and the remainder of the guests follows his lead.

“I think my father would’ve rather seen me courted by Major Andre,” Peggy confesses, “being a loyalist and all... But he will come ‘round to you I am sure.”

“I certainly hope so,” Benedict says.

Spotting him by the fireplace, Judge Shippen waves politely, smiles, and detaches himself from the crowd to greet Benedict.

“Glad you could make it,” he says warmly, shaking his hand. “Goodness, I hope your leg isn’t troubling you too much.”

“Thank you, your honor,” Benedict replies.

“Tell me: how did your hearing with the Continental Congress fair? There have been rumors of corruption charges brought against you,” the judge says, his tone quickly becoming far more disapproving.

“I assure you, it is all political. I spoke out against the economic distress this war has caused, and the congress is displeased with me. They are trying to punish me for my opinions, nothing more,” he answers. “I will be acquitted.”

“I am pleased to hear this, Major Arnold,” Shippen grins. “We need more men with your particular mindset in charge.”

“Many would frown upon socializing with the colonists loyal to Britain,” Peggy comments.

“Indeed. But it is alienation that created this conflict. We mustn’t turn on our neighbors so quickly. Otherwise, what will happen to the Americas after this revolution’s completion?” Benedict reasons.

“Are you sure you are not just hedging your bets, Major?” Shippen chuckles. “Surely you can see the writing on the wall. That band of renegades can only parade around, pretending to engage the king’s troops for so long, you know.”

Benedict is about to speak but Shippen cuts across him.

“You know, I am sure the British could use someone with your skill and strategy, should you change your mind and give up this hapless crusade,” Shippen suggests. “But enough talk of politics, I apologize. This is a day of celebration, not argument. Enjoy yourself! I must see to my other guests but I am glad to have had the chance to speak with you.” Shippen excuses himself politely. He catches the eye of another guest from across the room, and crosses over to him.

Peggy smiles. “That seems to have gone well,” she says reassuringly. “He is certainly warming up to you.”

“Perhaps he wants my protection; the loyalists are being run out of Philadelphia by the rebels. Many have already left,” Benedict reasons.

“Whatever the reason, I only wish you act soon,” she pleads.

“Of course,” Benedict nods.

After a short pause, Peggy says; “He’s right you know, about the politics of it all. You *would* be valuable to the British. Then you would not have to worry about being reprimanded for associating with us *Tories*.”

“You may well have a point, it *is* something to consider.”

III. 1779
Unconventional Tactics:
British Pushback

April 17th

Stansbury General Store

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The store is empty – not just of customers, but of wares as well. The few shelves have been pushed into a corner, and covered with a large cloth sheet. There is a small table with two chairs in the center of the dimly lit room. Joseph Stansbury occupies one of these, sifting through a stack of papers. The creaking door hinge causes him to look up from his work.

“Mr. Arnold! What a pleasant surprise,” Joseph says. He rises to greet Benedict. The Brigadier General still walks with some discomfort, but no longer with the aid of a cane. “Come, sit.”

The pair pulls up the two chairs to the table.

“Closing shop?” Benedict asks.

“Yes, moving out, I’m afraid. I had to stand trial in the meeting hall. They want to jail me for my role in supervising the city during the British occupation,” Joseph explains. “Fortunately, I was able to negotiate a deal.”

“Really?” Benedict inquires. “What did you have to offer?”

“My safe passage to New York, where I can live quietly for the rest of the war – in exchange for negotiating the return of a few rebel prisoners we’re holding out on Long Island.”

“I am pleased to hear it, although I must say you will be missed here.”

“Enough about *my* troubles,” Joseph waves his hand dismissively, “What about you? Congratulations on your engagement, by the way. I suppose Judge Shippen has warmed up to you after all, then?” Joseph smiles.

“Thank you, he has. It was some much needed good news; congress finished its review of my finances, they’ve been deliberating the issue since December.”

“And?”

“They demand I pay for the unaccounted funds.”

“But they owe *you* money! How much of your savings has been spent on the rebel army?”

“Exactly, and for that reason, I have no money to pay them. So much of my own wealth has been poured into this damnable conflict,” he sighs. “That is why I am here. I want your assistance, Joseph.”

Joseph pushes away the stack of papers and folds his hands on the tabletop. He leans forward attentively.

“What do you need?”

“Can you put me in contact with General Clinton?” Benedict asks.

“I can try, but...are you certain you wish to make this connection? You would be committing treason.”

“We have talked about this Joseph, and I have given the matter quite a bit of thought,” Benedict says. “My Continental Congress already thinks poorly of me, and I can read the writing on the wall. I might as well make the best of the hand I have been dealt.”

“I *am* pleased to hear it. Fortunately for us, my agreement with congress will permit me to travel between Philadelphia and New York while I negotiate the prisoner release. I will make the trip, and say you have information for sale—”

“No,” Benedict hastily interjects. “Do not mention my name, give as few specifics as possible. And involve no one else in this plot, do you understand?”

“I can do that,” Joseph nods, “but I cannot take that risk without some comparison. I *am* being watched after all; I don’t want to be jailed on your behalf for free, you’ll understand.”

Benedict grimaces, and wraps his knuckles on the table. “I can offer you, say, five percent of what Howe gives me for the information, after, of course, the payment comes to me.”

“Five? I am taking a greater risk than you here. Twenty.”

“I could hire a discrete courier for far less. Have you lost your wits? Ten.”

“Fine then, ten percent *plus* travel expenses, paid *up front*.”

“That, I can manage. I will need to keep this under wraps until I am prepared to leave Philadelphia. I cannot be exposed as a loyalist sympathizer here, in the rebel capital.”

“Naturally,” Joseph says. “I can use the utmost digression.”

“Good. I appreciate your service, Joseph.”

“I am glad you came around, sir.”

April 24th

Queen's Rangers Outpost

Setauket, New York

“Shall I send in the next one, Colonel?” A young loyalist recruit asked his commander.

Colonel John Graves Simcoe nodded in approval. Simcoe oversaw the Queen's Rangers, a regiment made up not of British regulars, but of loyalists plucked from the population of the American colonies who were either fed up with the economic hardship the Patriots had brought upon them, or Tories who were never sympathetic to the war effort to begin with. They lacked the etiquette and knowledge of the British time-honored military tactics – which was perfectly fine with Simcoe. He disliked the idea of marching into battle in perfect formation, chasing around guerilla rebels in a futile attempt to engage them in traditional open combat. No, Simcoe had his own advanced tactics he preferred to teach, and he was met with relatively good results.

The recruit gives a hasty salute before stepping out of the sacristy and into the nave of the church. The Rangers had dragged all the pews outside to be burned for warmth in the coming winter months, and brought in horses in their place. The whole building has an almost palpable must hanging in the air; between *that* and the constant pawing of the horses at the church's wood floor, Simcoe found it difficult to concentrate on much of anything. *I'll be back in Virginia soon enough.* He tells himself.

Through the church windows – some of which had been shattered by gunfire in the still recent battle of Setauket – and beyond the gravestones, which had been uprooted

and rearranged into crude ramparts, Simcoe can see his ranger-in-training talking to another man out on the village green. The young soldier points to the church and beckons until the man follows him inside.

“Colonel Simcoe, sir,” the recruit says as he escorts the stranger through the nave and into the make-shift office, “I present to you: John Worley, come to Setauket from Connecticut to speak with you.” Simcoe eyes Worley up and down. He has an unimposing stature with frail limbs, meek and unimposing.

“Thank you, that will be all, boy,” Simcoe dismisses his assistant, who exits swiftly.

“I appreciate you making the time to see me sir,” Worley begins.

“You must forgive me, Mr. Worley, but I *do* have much to attend to this afternoon despite my setting aside this time, so if you could get down to the point...”

“O-of course,” Worley stammers. He shuffles nervously.

“I have had some trouble with the rebels in dealing with my family’s estates in Connecticut, a small matter of my debts and such, and it has become worrisome to me. Loyalists are scarce across the devil’s belt, as I am sure you know. I fear that I will be driven out – or worse – if this conflict drags on much longer. I have information that may be useful to his Majesty’s forces, but I need protection from the rebel militia.”

Simcoe ponders this. “I cannot make promises on such vague claims,” he says slowly, “*but*, if your information is as good as you make it appear, then we can talk about protection. Our control of Connecticut is limited at the moment, as you said, but after this rebellion is resolved, we will ensure that all anything that has been taken from you is returned.”

“Very well. You may have spies in your midst, Colonel,” Worley warns.

Simcoe laughs, “This is what you waste my time with? I could believe such accusations if you were a resident of Setauket, or even a nearby town, but from so far away? My loyalist contacts in this town have heard nary a whisper of rebel presence. Our regulars have occupied Setauket since the war broke out; many of these townsfolk *live* with our soldiers *inside* their homes. How could anyone be harboring spies? And how could you know of this, coming to me from an entirely different colony, miles away?”

“Abraham Woodhull,” Worley says softly.

“What about him? Why does his name sound familiar?” Simcoe rises from his seat and crosses the room to a chest of drawers on the opposite wall. He riffles through a few stacks of paper before finding what he is looking for, and returning to his desk.

Worley stands on tiptoe to see what Simcoe is reading. “What is that?”

This is a list of names, given to me by the Carlisle Commission, of Setauket residents who swore and signed an oath of loyalty to the King before all their neighbors on the village green. And *this*—” Simcoe taps his index finger on the paper, sliding it across his desk so Worley can see, “—is Abraham Woodhull’s name, and signature.”

Worley shakes his head.

“You know better than I?” Simcoe asks with one raised eyebrow.

“N—no, sir, I have simply heard a different story.”

“And what is it that you’ve heard?”

“Woodhull was released from rebel custody—” Worley begins.

“—Probably because they have higher profile prisoners to attend than *him*. They are at war after all. What was he arrested for to begin with? Low level smuggling?”

Simcoe cuts him off. “I’d heard the same rumors around here. For a few weeks back in September, neighbors all swore he signed on with Washington to get his sentence cut.”

“And you don’t believe them?”

Simcoe shakes his head. “If I put credence in every baseless accusation that arises from neighborly gossip, I’d have given my commanding officer enough *misinformation* to cost us the war.”

Worley flashes a toothy smile for an instant, conjuring up an image of a rat sitting on its haunches in Simcoe’s mind. “But did you know that it was the Governor of Connecticut that *personally* ordered his release?”

“Really?” Simcoe asks with legitimate interest. He leans forward over his desk, drawn in.

Worley nods.

“And where do you suppose that order came down from, Colonel? Why would the Governor take such interest in, as you said, a low level smuggler? If the prison was full, a local jailer could have decided to release him of his own accord. But this smacks of outside intervention, maybe even from Washington himself...”

Simcoe puts up a hand to stop him. “That is quite enough. Without corroboration this is still just a mere allegation. I will have my loyalist sources verify your claims, and keep Woodhull in mind should any suspicious activity transpire. Beyond that I can do nothing at this time.”

“But our agreement—”

“—Was that if your intelligence was of value, we would talk about a reward; protecting you and your estate from the rebels. Do not insult my memory, I have not

forgotten. If anything transpires, I will contact my Major, and *then* I will contact you. At present, I suggest you return to Connecticut and keep your head down. This pointless conflict will be over soon,” Simcoe says, dismissively. “Be gone.”

Worley slinks out of the temporary office.

“Be watchful of Woodhull,” he calls over his shoulder.

Simcoe does not respond, simply staring after him pensively.

May 11th

Board of Loyalists Headquarters

New York, New York

The meeting house – set above a printing shop – makes William Franklin feel almost at home; even amid the clattering and loud noises that often rumble up through the thin floors. The walls are bare, save for a portrait of King George III on one side of the room, and a Union Jack on the other. William sits behind his sturdy desk, putting together leaflets that have just been printed downstairs. The cover reads: “Honor and loyalty – your king needs your support.” The Windows facing the street are open, allowing a pleasant late-spring breeze to fill the room. Once William finishes folding the sheets of paper, he stands, and walks up and down the rows of chairs he has set up, facing his desk, and places a pamphlet on each of the seats.

William spends the better part of the American Revolution without family. The illegitimate son of Benjamin Franklin, William’s already limited relationship with his father was strained to the breaking point as the war broke out. William served as the last colonial governor of New Jersey, resisting the rebel governing body despite pleas from his father to join the revolution. William was captured and jailed by the Continental army. He was eventually released, likely at the insistence of his father, under the conditions that he would remain in New York, and that he would not return to rally the remaining pockets of loyalist resistance in his home state.

“Need a hand?” Jonathan Odell calls from the doorway by the stairs.

“Didn’t hear you come up,” William comments.

Ignoring his last response, Jonathan walks over to the desk and looks at the pamphlets.

“Did you enjoy my piece this week?” he asks.

“I liked the last one better, but this one was still quite good,” William answers honestly.

“What was wrong with this one?”

“A bit cynical for me. I suppose it will resonate well with the hardened Loyalists but I doubt it will help bring in any on the fence.”

Jonathan shrugs. He too was unwelcome in New Jersey after his reputation as a strong loyalist drew the ire of the New Jersey Provincial Congress – the same governing body that ousted William Franklin. The Congress demanded he swear an oath of loyalty and stay in Burlington County, where the rebel government could watch him. Defying that order, he fled to New York to work with his friend William writing pro-British satirical poetry.

“Just like Swift said, right: ‘Satire is a sort of glass wherein beholders do generally discover everybody’s face but their own...’” Jonathan says with a flourish.

“Still think you might be a bit on the nose.”

“Well *I* liked it. We shall see what the others think at the meeting,” William replies.

“Excuse me!” Another voice called from the stairwell. “Hello? Is this where the Board of Loyalists meets?”

“You’ve come to the right place, but a bit early. We don’t meet until three,” William answers. The man has stepped up into the doorway. “What’s your name sir? I

don't recall ever seeing you in before, and I make a point of getting to know as many of the loyal citizens as I can."

"Joseph Stansbury. I was formerly an administrator of Philadelphia during the occupation. I saw to it that everyone was well fed and looked after," he explains.

"What brings you here then?" Jonathan inquires.

"Well, as you can imagine the rebels were none too pleased with me when they took the city and found out about my station. I was going to be jailed, but I was able to negotiate my freedom in exchange for brokering a minor prisoner release. Until this is completed, I am free to come and go as I please," Joseph explains.

"Lucky for you then," William comments, "Jonathan and I are never allowed home, not until this war is over."

"That is what I heard, yes," Joseph says. "I must admit I *do* know who you are, William and Jonathan. I have been looking for you, to seek your assistance. I am trying to arrange an audience with Henry Clinton."

William laughs: "*General* Henry Clinton? Not possible."

"Yes that's what I was told by the local officers I spoke with at the barracks," Joseph says. "I must say I have been quite frustrated in my efforts."

"What do you need to see the general for?" Jonathan asks.

"I am afraid I am not at liberty to say. All I *can* tell you is that it is a matter of great importance, and could be an excellent opportunity for the British army to stamp out the rebellion."

William shakes his head.

"We cannot help you unless we *know* specifics," Jonathan presses.

“Alright,” Joseph says hesitantly, “but you must tell no one else. If this secret were to get out, the information would be useless.”

“Of course,” William agrees.

“Very well then. I am here on behalf of a high-ranking officer in the Continental Army, one who knows that the rebels can only put up a fight for so long. He is willing to share important secrets regarding the movements of Washington’s army and local militias, perhaps even more drastic measures after a trust is built up,” Joseph reveals. “Of course, this commander is taking a large risk in sharing this intelligence, and would need to be fairly compensated.”

“I do not know what you want from *me*. I no longer have the authority to broker such deals, not since I have been driven from my office,” William sighs. “But, even if I did, I know for a fact the King’s army already has quite a few informants on its payroll. The information is often stale, rarely actionable. Why should your contact be given more credence than any of these other men?”

“Because he is—”

“And please do not tantalize us by re-stating that he is ‘high ranking.’ I cannot take your say so on matter such as these,” William cuts him off.

Joseph leans against the doorframe, thinking.

“We would need a name. Then *maybe* we could set something in motion,” Jonathan says.

Joseph takes a few steps into the room and replies: “Brigadier General Benedict Arnold. Keep in mind, gentleman, that this information is completely useless to you if Arnold is exposed as a loyalist.”

“Obviously,” Jonathan acknowledges.

“As I said, I cannot personally take action on this matter in brokering a deal. However, I know someone who can.”

“Whom?”

“The newly appointed British Spymaster, Major General John Andre,” William says plainly. “I can see if he would be interested in the information – it may take a while to get the information to him, I do not know if he will accept an audience with me.”

“Is there any way to expedite the process? Arnold is impatient,” Joseph counters.

“I could speak with the Mayor of New York city. I had many dealings with him while I served as governor of New Jersey. Being of course that he still holds office, I would imagine his word holds more weight with Major Andre than does mine,” William suggests.

“I would prefer we involve as few people in this operation as possible. Less chance for a leak, you understand?”

“Yes, but involving the mayor may be a necessary step if you wish to move forward. As I said, I simply oversee the Board of Loyalists. I have very little to do with the military activity here.”

“Very well,” Joseph replies. “But do not delay long; when the prisoner negotiation is finished, I can no longer travel freely to Philadelphia to discuss terms with Arnold.”

William nods. “I will be sure to communicate your urgency, Mr. Stansbury. Thank you for your time.”

May 13th

Andre's Headquarters

New York, New York

The long dining room table is decadent, complete with a tablecloth, runner, and candelabras upon the surface. Aside from these adornments are many finer dishes far beyond the spoiled rations handed out to the rank and file of the British army. The table is surrounded with high backed wooden chairs, *borrowed* from the house's previous owner. The walls are decorated with hung tapestries and paintings while a fireplace crackles warmly in the corner. The ration struggles in the New York Garrison are certainly not felt here. At the head of the table is Major John Andre in full uniform. He is well groomed and sits with perfect posture. His clothes are unwrinkled and spotless. Andre is not alone: lower-ranking commanders occupy a few of the other chairs, while loyalist women that Andre has taken a liking to fill the rest.

There is some nervous conversation at the far end of the table, but in proximity to Andre, everyone is silent. Scared looking regulars stand guard beside the door at the far end of the room, opposite Andre. They try not to make eye contact with any of the guests eating at the table. Someone in the parlor beyond the doors knocks, causing the guards to jump nervously. One of them holds the door ajar and exchanges a few whispered words with the man on the opposite side.

“Sir?” The guard calls across the table. Andre looks up from his meal and gently lowers his fork, noiselessly. “Colonel Simcoe is here to deliver an intelligence update,” The guard explains.

“Very good,” Andre nods.

Simcoe pushes open the door and steps into the room. “Major, might I speak with you in private?”

“Of course,” Andre replies. Then, to his guests: “Excuse me.” The major removes a cloth napkin from his lap and places it on the table, before pushing his chair back and standing up. He then joins Simcoe in the parlor. The two men wait for the door to close behind them to begin their conversation.

“What did you wish to speak with me about?” Andre asks. “Your letter indicated it was urgent.”

“Yes, I received an interesting report in April about a potential spy in Setauket, Long Island: Abraham Woodhull,” Simcoe begins.

“Then why is this the first *I* am hearing of this?” Andre demands, crossly.

“This knowledge came from a questionable source: a debtor from Connecticut who wanted the British Army to protect him and his property from the rebels in exchange for information,” Simcoe explains. “I was doubtful that he could know anything of substance about the goings-on of Setauket while the residents have heard *nothing* of the sort.”

“How did he obtain this information?”

“He claims to have known one of the jailers at the prison where Woodhull was being held for smuggling. He was bringing produce to our garrison in New York City in exchange for luxuries. Those who dealt with him said he was actually quite helpful. Our connections were able to verify that Woodhull was released by order of the Connecticut governor,” Simcoe says.

“That is most suspicious,” Andre agrees.

“Even more: his neighbors say he has made *numerous* trips to New York City over the past few months. Each for a few days,” Simcoe reveals.

Andre scratches his chin. “We have suspected an intelligence leak in our New York garrison. Abraham Woodhull *could* be responsible. I’m not entirely convinced he is a spy; he was smuggling for the British just last year, after all.”

“Sir?”

“That said it is better to be overly cautious than naïve. Arrest Woodhull on suspicion of treason,” Andre orders.

“Yes Major Andre.”

June 5th

Woodhull Residence

Setauket, New York

Knock, Knock, Knock. Richard Woodhull puts his pen back down on his desk – the same one where his son Abraham had opened that first letter from Tallmadge, months ago – and listens. *Knock, Knock, Knock.* He hears the sound again. Putting aside his journal and inkwell, Richard leaves his study, descends the stairs, and approaches the front door.

Odd. He thinks. *I was not expecting anyone.* The next sound Richard hears is a loud thud, followed by cracking wood. Splinters fly into the entryway, and the door is knocked aside.

Six redcoats immediately push their way into the Woodhull home, shoving Richard aside and moving on to the rest of the house. Richard falls to the floor and clutches a nearby wall for support. Last through the door is Colonel Simcoe. He steps toward Richard, who tries fruitlessly to scramble away.

“Come here,” Simcoe orders, grabbing Richard by his shirt and lifting him into a limp standing position.

“Please, what do you want with me?” Richard asks feebly.

Simcoe shakes his head. “Not you. We’re looking for Abraham Woodhull.”

“I am his father. What has he done that concerns you?”

Out of the corner of his eye, Richard sees the soldiers searching the house furiously, pulling out drawers, rifling through cupboards, and displacing furniture.

“Major John Andre commands he be arrested and questioned on suspicion of treason,” Simcoe replies. “Now *where* is he?”

“I—”

With his free hand, Simcoe punches Richard in the stomach.

Richard doubles over in pain, groaning.

“I am through with pleasantries,” Simcoe growls, “and I am beginning to lose my patience.

“Please, my son isn’t here.”

“But he does *live* here, yes?” Simcoe asks.

Richard nods.

“Then where has he gone?”

After Richard is silent for a few moments, Simcoe delivers a series of jabs, this time to Richard’s ribs.

“Damn you!” Richard yells. He clenches his jaw and grimaces through the pain.

“Where has he gone?” Simcoe repeats his question.

“He left yesterday and said he was going on a trip for a few days; didn’t say where. Please, just leave me be,” Richard whimpers. He holds a hand up to shield his face. Simcoe draws back a fist to hit him again.

“Sir!” One of the Queen’s Rangers approaches Simcoe.

“What is it? Have you found anything?” Simcoe asks.

“There is no evidence here to incriminate Abraham Woodhull, nor is he hiding in the house,” the ranger reports.

“Nothing?” The soldiers shake their heads “Damn. Pull back, search the property, and we’ll re-group at the village green,” Simcoe commands.

“Yes, sir.”

As Richard lowers his hands in relief, Simcoe turns and strikes his face. “Tell your son to turn himself in, if he wants his family left alone.” Without waiting for a response, Simcoe casts Richard to the floor, where he lays still, petrified of getting up. The Queen’s Rangers then storm out as quickly as they came, stepping hastily over the splintered remains of the door.

The hasty footsteps beating down on the path fade into the distance, then silence.

Richard lifts one of his hands tenderly to his face to determine how badly he had been injured. His nose stung, and he could taste a small trickle of blood trickling down to the corner of his mouth, but from what he could tell, the bridge was not broken. He puts a hand on the nearby wall, and pushes up with his feet, trying to bring himself into a standing position.

“Ah!” Richard cries out, and falls back to the floor, clutching his chest. He runs his fingertips across his ribcage and inhales sharply. *Definitely bruised a few ribs. Hopefully none are broken,* He thinks. Trying a different strategy, Richard manages to pull himself into a sitting position. With a great deal of effort, he manages to pull himself into an awkward sitting position. He looks around at the ransacked house.

The floor is littered with bits of paper that the rangers had thrown hastily from any drawer they could find. Not far from where Richard sits, an inkwell has been smashed, splashing flecks of black up one of the entryway walls. Much of the furniture within view has been overturned as well.

“This’ll take hours to clean up,” Richard complains to the empty house. He pushes up against the wall with his legs, trying to move his upper body as little as possible. Finally standing, but still a little dizzy, Richard braces against the wall for support. While he’s standing there thinking about the mess he has been left with, another thought comes to him. *What if they come back?* He wonders. *I would not want to be here if they do.*

Tap, Tap, Tap. There is a knocking on the doorframe, this time far more gentle than the rangers.

“Wh—who’s there?” Richard demands, backing slowly away.

“Hello? Mr. Woodhull?” A woman’s voice calls. Nancy Strong steps through the splintered doorframe. “Mrs. Woodhull? Abraham? Anyone, hello!”

“Nancy?” Richard gasps, losing his balance.

“What happened to you?” she asks, rushing to his side. “I was on my way into town when I heard yelling and saw a group of soldiers leaving the house!”

“They—they kicked the door down, demanded to know where Abraham was, and then tore the place apart looking for something,” Richard grunts, clutching his chest. Nancy takes his arm and places it around her shoulders, allowing him to lean on her for support.

“They wanted Abraham?” Nancy asks frantically. *If he is caught, he could lead the British back to me!* She thinks. “Did you tell them?”

Richard shakes his head. “I don’t know myself. When I asked where he was going, he said it was safer if I didn’t know. I suspected he was up to something but – ah,” Richard gasps and clutches his side. He puts more of his weight on Nancy.

“Easy,” Nancy says, buckling slightly under Richard’s weight. “What about your wife?”

“She’s in town for the afternoon,” Richard answers. “Please, I can’t stay here,” Richard, begs. “If they come back...” He trails off.

“You’re right, we should get you into town. I’d bring you to my cottage but it’s crammed full of people already, and just a stone’s throw from the British Garrison at the Strong family manor. Do you have any friends in town?” Nancy asks.

Richard nods. “The Roe family. Austin Roe, he’s got a little tavern just at the edge of town.” The two of them shuffle

“I know Austin as well. I trust him,” Nancy says. “I’ll take you to him, get you cleaned up, and find your wife.”

“And Abraham,” Richard adds.

“Goodness, you’re right. If the British want him, we can’t let him walk into an ambush,” Nancy exclaims.

Town Border

Setauket, New York

Abraham slows his horse to a trot, feeling uneasy. He is only a few miles out of Setauket, and he’s trying to keep everything he has learned clear in his mind so that he can write it down upon his arrival. He is mentally reciting a checklist of the British commanders he had seen when he notices another figure riding toward him at a good clip.

Being in the early evening, he can't make out a face from this distance. Abraham averts his eyes and maintains his course, hoping it isn't a ranger. He wasn't carrying anything suspicious, but the checks were never pleasant, and he always ran the risk of being caught in a lie. The rider dashes passed him without so much as slowing down. But rather than hearing the thunderous foot-falls of the horse fade away completely, the sound seems to decrease, stop entirely, and then pick up again, as if the rider has turned around. The pace is not a full gallop this time, but still considerably faster than Abraham's own horse.

The clapping of hooves draws nearer, but Abraham doesn't dare break out into a full gallop. If this is a British ranger, the last thing he wants to do is run. He might as well tie off his own noose. Abraham closes his eyes and exhales deeply, preparing himself to be stopped and questioned as he hears the other rider pull along side him. He continues looking straight ahead.

"Cover your face, and come to the tavern," The second rider orders.

Abraham turns his head. "Austin? What are you doing out here," he asks.

"We don't have much time before we reach town. *Cover your face*, and come to my tavern. I've closed down for the night," Austin repeats himself.

"But—"

"Your house is not safe," Austin cuts him off. "Colonel Simcoe took a group of his rangers to search the place, looking for you," He explains, "And they're waiting for you to return."

"What of my parents?"

"Your father was home during the search. He was beaten, but his injuries are not serious," Austin says.

“At his age, any such injuries could be considered serious,” Abraham exclaims.

“I think he is more concerned about you coming home safely,” Austin assures him. “At any rate, I’m going to ride on ahead, best we not be seen together – best you not be seen at all. I shall prepare for you, and at the tavern you can plan your next course of action. Tie your horse in the back stables, away from the street. Then come ‘round the side.”

“Understood. Prayerfully, I shall be with you soon,” Abraham replies.

Austin flicks the reins and speeds off into the descending darkness.

Following his friend’s instructions, Abraham maintains his pace. When he arrives at the edge of Setauket, rather than turning left and proceeding toward the village green, and his home, he continues along the road. He nearly passes the town altogether, but stops just at the edge of Setauket at the Roe Tavern. Again per the instructions, he leaves his horse in the stables, and comes around the side of the building, which faces away from the main road. A smaller sign has been hung across the shingle, which reads: “*closed for the evening.*” Abraham knocks softly on the door.

There is no immediate response, but the curtain of the window nearest the door is drawn back slightly, as Austin peers outside to ensure that the visitor *is* Abraham, and not a would-be customer, or a Redcoat. He then pulls the door open to admit his friend.

“Thanks for the warning, Austin,” he says gratefully.

“You’d have done the same for me.”

Abraham looks around the tavern. There are no customers, and the majority of the chairs are stacked upon the tables. It appears Austin had been in the process of mopping the floors when he arrived. At one table by the bar, Margaret – Abraham’s mother – is

dabbing the blood from Richard's face. Nancy sits beside her, cutting bandages. They all look up when they hear the door close.

"Abraham!" Richard says, smiling. His smile turns into a grimace as he clutches his side and hunches over.

"Easy Richard," Margaret warns him, "you better stay still until Nancy and I have a look at that." Then, to Abraham: "We've been so worried the Queen's Rangers had captured you. They've blocked off everything north of the old schoolhouse, waiting to ambush you."

"I'm alright, thanks to Austin. What about you, father? Did they hurt you badly?"

"Simcoe," Richard groans. "He wanted to know where you'd gone but I told him I wasn't sure," he explains.

"I found him trying to hobble out of his house, wanted to be sure you were warned," Nancy explains.

"Thank you. I'm so sorry, I never meant for this to involve you all," Abraham says forlornly.

"It's a bit late for that, Abraham," Nancy half-laughs.

"But if not us, then who *can* you trust?" Austin demands.

"You're wanted now, it's not as though we can get in any more trouble than we have, son," Margaret comments. Abraham exhales and pulls up a chair beside his family. Austin does the same.

"The brief explanation," Abraham says, "Is that I visit Amos and Mary to gather information about the British in New York City. I come back here, write it down, and send it over to Washington."

“How does it get to him?” Richard inquires.

“Caleb Brewster makes landfall every so often to take Abraham’s reports to Ben Tallmadge. The *he* delivers a summary to the General,” Nancy explains.

“You’re in on this too?” Margaret demands incredulously.

Nancy nods.

“But when you swore your oath to the Carlisle Commission—”

“I was trying to draw away suspicion,” Abraham explains. “Only, that looks like it hasn’t worked. I just don’t know what gave me away.”

Austin thinks for a moment. “A lot of regulars and rangers alike come in here,” he says. “There was talk last week of a group of men, some prisoners, who had come down from Connecticut to give testimony against possible traitors. A mousey man called John Worley apparently brought some, ‘credible intelligence about a traitor here in Setauket,’ that’s according to one of the soldiers chatting in here,” Austin explains.

“How can a man from Connecticut have any credible intelligence against Abraham?” Nancy asks. She has finished cutting bandages, and is dabbing at Richard’s side with spirits on a rag, while Margaret lifts his shirt to expose his injured ribcage. There is some bruising, but nothing appears to be broken.

“I’ve no idea,” Abraham shakes his head. “But for Colonel Simcoe to act on this threat, he must have *some* knowledge.”

“Well, in either case, at the very least, the British are suspicious,” Austin says. “And as much as I would like to help you, I cannot keep you hidden here until the war ends. After a few days, Simcoe will realize you should’ve been home already. Then he’ll start searching houses of your known friends. That includes both *me*, and Nancy.”

“You have a point,” Abraham agrees.

“As luck would have it, Caleb’s boat is due any day now. He could get you, Margaret, and Richard to Connecticut where you’ll be safe,” Nancy suggests.

Abraham shakes his head. “What about Mary? Simcoe will search for her as well. Besides, Washington needs this information. If the British win the war, Connecticut will not be safe for long regardless.”

“Then what do you propose?” Nancy demands.

“What about Benjamin?” Margaret suggests. “Benjamin Floyd.”

“Who?” Austin asks?

“A loyalist cousin of mine,” Abraham explains.

“He *does* work under Simcoe,” Richard says.

“Would he vouch for you?” Austin questions. “I’m not sure what it would be worth, but if Simcoe sees you have loyalist family connections, he might leave you alone.”

“He didn’t find anything at the house,” Richard explains. “The Queen’s Rangers must have better things to do than chasing down weak leads.”

“You’re right,” Nancy agrees. “That’s probably the safest. How soon can you get in touch with your cousin?”

“I would like to talk with him tonight. It’s not an hour past sunset, he should still be garrisoned at the village green,” Abraham says.

“I can speak with him,” Margaret offers. “I doubt the soldiers will do anything to stop me. I’ll have him report to Simcoe and explain this away.”

“I should speak with him personally. But if you can get him away from the others, that would be wonderful.”

“I will,” Margaret nods.

“Alright. But I still need to get word to Tallmadge,” Abraham says. “He needs to know that it will take some reorganizing before I can send him anymore information. I can write a quick letter explaining the situation, everything we know, and what I plan to do. You said Caleb was set to make landfall in the next few days, Nancy?”

“Yes. I can take him the letter in your place,” She offers. “Even if you resolve matters with Simcoe tonight, you should keep your head down for a while until this blows over.”

“Excellent,” Abraham says.

“But what about going forward?” Austin asks.

“What do you mean?”

“Well you can’t have your cousin swear to Simcoe you aren’t up to anything, and then keep right on sneaking about in New York. The man didn’t make Colonel by having a thick skull, he is liable to figure you out eventually,” Austin says.

“He’s absolutely right,” Richard remarks.

“No more solo trips,” comments Nancy.

“Until you come up with something a little bit more permanent, I could make the trips for you,” Austin offers.

“How would that be any different?” Abraham asks.

“I have *proper* cause. Not just visiting family. I go there to buy supplies for my tavern,” Austin answers, jabbing a thumb at the bar behind him. “I could stop in at your

sister's house, just as a family friend being put up overnight. Then I come home with my inventory – and information for you – hand it off. Then you write your report for Brewster, and Tallmadge writes his for Washington.”

“You would be willing to take that risk?” Abraham asks incredulously.

“I'm fairly certain I don't want to be on the same side as the likes of *Simcoe*. They've crossed the line. I've seen the risk now and yes; I am willing to take it,” Austin proclaims.

“Thank you,” Abraham says. “Of course, I will have to give you some instruction on the proper protocol, and we shall have to work out a system by which you pass along your intelligence. But that can wait until we've sorted this out.”

“Of course,” Austin agrees.

Satisfied with her work, Nancy begins to wrap the bandages around Richard's midsection. After a few wraps around, she takes a stick that she had placed on the chair, and holds it against his side.

“Raise your arm,” she commands. Richard obeys.

Nancy wraps the bandages around the stick, making a good splint. “Don't do anything too strenuous for a few days. I doubt any ribs are broken, but it's better to be careful, alright?” Nancy says.

“Alright,” Richard nods.

“As for the rest of us,” Abraham says, “thank you for your help in keeping me safe, and for taking care of my family. I will not soon forget this.”

“Let us pray that it works,” Austin comments.

“Please let me know how your talk with Mr. Floyd goes, Margaret,” Nancy says politely. “I would stay, but I must be getting home to my family. There is little more I can do here.”

“You’ve done, plenty already, thank you,” Richard offers. She smiles at him pleasantly.

“Goodnight,” She waves as she exits through the front door.

“We should be off too if we’re to catch Benjamin,” Margaret says.

“Agreed. Father, you should stay here and rest, Austin will you stay with him?” Abraham asks.

“I do not need looking after,” Richard coughs.

“Easy,” Margaret warns.

“I know,” Richard rolls his eyes. He gingerly pulls his shirt down over the dressing, and then begins gently moving his arms and turning his body at the waist to test his range of motion. For the first time, Abraham gets a proper look at his father’s clothes, which are crusted with dried blood.

“That was quite the beating – by any standard – you can’t go out covered in blood anyway,” Austin says.

“Do you have any other clothes?” Abraham asks, gesturing weakly to the bloodstains.

“I left the house in a bit of a hurry.”

“I can get you and your clothes cleaned up, lend you a set of mine, while your son clears things up with Simcoe,” Austin offers.

“Thank you,” Richard says appreciatively.

“Of course. But you two, hurry on now, you don’t want to miss your opportunity,” Austin urges.

“Right, Abraham are you ready?” Margaret asks. He nods.

“Let us go.”

They step out of the tavern and round the corner to the stable. Abraham unties his horse, and leads it out into the open. He pats it on the nose gently.

“What is your plan?” Margaret asks.

“We can ride together, around the outskirts to Saddle Rock. I will be safe and in cover while you fetch Benjamin. And the rock shouldn’t be too far of a walk from the church barracks,” Abraham explains.

“Alright, that could work,” Margaret nods.

“Here,” Abraham helps his mother mount the horse side. He then takes position in front of her, and rides off into the woods alongside the town.

After a short ride, they pull up to the hulking shadow of Saddle Rock, towering above them, even on horseback. It was here that, years ago, Benjamin Tallmadge had mounted his assault against the British garrison in the church atop the village green in the battle of Setauket.

Margaret dismounts gracefully.

“You should stay mounted in case...” she trails off. “I am sure it will be fine, but none the less.”

“Right. Good luck.”

Margaret ventures out from behind the rock. There is still a thicket of trees between here and the makeshift military base. Between the gaps in the trees, the faint glow of lantern light creeps into the forest, but stops short of the rock that Abraham is waiting behind. After one look back to ensure her son is hidden, Margaret ventures out of the forest and into the clearing where a few rays of fleeting daylight still glow over the tree line to the west. She doesn't venture far before a regular stops her.

“Ma’am, I cannot let you pass any further,” the soldier says.

Mary looks around, peering behind the redcoat who is standing guard. She is about a hundred feet away from the perimeter of the church fortress. A few other regulars are on guard at posts, or walking patrols, but beyond the outer pikes and makeshift ramparts, many of the soldiers are relaxing around fire pits, making idle conversation.

“I am terribly sorry to bother you, but I would like to speak with Benjamin Floyd, he is family of mine,” Margaret tells the guard. “He serves with the Queen’s Rangers, under Colonel Simcoe. Is he here?” The guard looks at Margaret warily, and visibly relaxes.

“You are in luck then. The Rangers are stationed here overnight before they move back to their proper base in Oyster Bay. If you wait here I can go look for your kin,” The guard offers. “Floyd, you said?”

“Yes, Benjamin Floyd. Tell him Margaret wants to speak with him.”

“I will be back shortly.” The guard turns and enters the small walls and fortifications. She sees him between the pikes talking with a few soldiers around

campfires. He eventually wanders out of sight, only to return with a man Margaret recognizes.

“Found him for you,” the redcoat says.

“Thank you.”

“I should get back to my patrol, tell him not to be too long; his guard shift starts in two hours.” He takes a few steps back toward the base and paces before the entrance, gun clutched tightly in hand.

“Margaret, this is a pleasant surprise,” Floyd smiles with a toothy grin. He removes his uniform hat to uncover his wiry hair, and clutches it in his hands. He looks somehow too small for his uniform, pulling at the frock of his coat occasionally.

“Benjamin, might I speak with you for a moment in private?”

“Certainly,” he replies, still smiling.

Margaret leads him off down the hill, toward saddle rock.

“What did you want to speak about?”

“I had heard that Simcoe and his men were in Setauket, but I am glad I caught *you* in time. Some events have transpired that I would like to clarify,” Margaret explains. They have reached the tree line, and are about to come around the rock. “Actually, Abraham was hoping to talk with you as well.”

“Hello Benjamin. I require your assistance,” Abraham calls down from atop his horse.

Floyd jumps, startled. “Abraham! You scared me.”

“Good to see you,” Abraham says, disregarding his remark. “I am not sure if you heard about the raid upon my home.”

“No, I haven’t. Simcoe said he was going to investigate something in town, and brought a group of rangers with him, but I was previously engaged with other responsibilities,” Floyd explains.

“Simcoe beat my father because he has been misinformed,” Abraham explains.

“That is awful, Abraham! What does he think you did?” Floyd asks incredulously.

“He believes Abraham to be some kind of spy,” Margaret explains. Abraham casts her a wary look, and she stops.

“The accusation, frankly, is ludicrous, Benjamin. I have made a few visits into New York to see my sister Mary, and that is grounds to have your house vandalized? Especially given my history as a loyalist smuggler, then signing my oath of allegiance. I am no friend of the rebels,” Abraham says darkly.

“Knowing your family, I do find this all to be very unlikely,” Floyd agrees. “What would you like me to do about it?”

“I can’t imagine Colonel Simcoe has the time to run down useless leads. He should be more concerned with finding the *actual* menace here. Speak with him; encourage him to stop his pursuit. I wish to be able to return home without fear of another invasion, Benjamin,” Abraham says. Floyd ponders this for a moment.

“I will talk with Simcoe for you *tonight*. He is a rational man, I should be able to persuade him to give up his pursuit,” Benjamin offers.

“That would be wonderful,” Abraham says.

“Wait here, and I shall come back when I have news,” Floyd says. “I will return shortly.” Floyd turns and runs toward the base at a light jog. Abraham backs his horse further into the woods, away from the rock.

“Where are you going?” Margaret asks.

“If Benjamin is lying, he could fetch Simcoe and a group of rangers to arrest me, in exchange for a quick promotion,” Abraham says cautiously.

“Do you think Benjamin is capable of this? I never thought he was the conniving type,” Margaret comments.

“We should know soon either way, but I would rather err on the side of caution,” Abraham says. “Can you keep lookout and let me know if he returns with greater numbers?”

“Of course,” Margaret says. She peers around the side of Saddle Rock, and waits.

A half hour trickles by before Margaret sees Floyd approaching.

“Here he comes,” she calls to Abraham.

“Is he alone?”

“Yes.”

Abraham comes forward again.

“Good news,” Floyd calls happily.

“What is it?” Margaret demands.

“Simcoe was not pleased, but I explained to him that the Woodhulls are a loyalist family. The Colonel wants to continue the search regardless, out of revenge more than anything else. However, the rangers are to return to the Oyster Bay garrison, and the Colonel to meet with Major Andre. Simcoe said he will discuss the matter of continuing the investigation, but the Major is not one to continue fruitless endeavors. You should be safe, but it would be best to keep your head down for a while,” Floyd advises.

“I am indebted to you, Floyd,” Abraham says.

“We all are,” Margaret adds.

“Not at all; it is in my best interest too, ensuring that our resources are spent finding the *real* traitors,” Floyd reasons.

“The British Empire is lucky to have a soldier such as yourself,” Abraham smiles. He extends a hand down to his mother and helps him mount the horse.

“Goodnight,” Margaret calls down to Floyd. Abraham spurs the sides of his horse, and gallops into the thickening darkness.

Roe Tavern

Setauket, New York

Richard and Austin are sitting at the table, visibly anxious. Richard has changed into a clean shirt that hangs about him loosely, just slightly too big. He drums his fingers on the table in anticipation. Near him on the table are his crumpled and bloodied clothes.

Tap, Tap, Tap. Richard leaps up in his seat, almost upsetting the table. He then immediately clutches his side, strained by the sudden movement. Without waiting for a reply, Abraham opens the door and steps into the room, beaming. He puts down his travel bag on the table.

“Sorry we took so long, I had to unsaddle the horse,” he says.

“Never mind that, how’d the meeting go?” Richard demands.

“Did you talk to Floyd?” Austin asks.

“We managed to catch him right before his guard shift started,” Margaret says.

“He went and talked to Simcoe straight away. Apparently the Queen’s Rangers are leaving town tomorrow morning, and the Colonel isn’t too pleased about it. He wants to stick around and wait for me, but Floyd said that General Andre wants to meet with him and discuss whether it is actually worth continuing to pursue me with so little evidence,” Abraham explains. “He says he doubts the General will authorize any more arrest attempts while they have more pressing matters to attend to.”

“That is fantastic news,” Richard says cheerfully.

“We still have to stay here tonight,” Margaret reminds him. “It will be safer to go home after the Queen’s Rangers are *out* of town.”

“And we do have a bit of a mess to clean up when we return,” Richard remembers.

“At least you won’t have to flee to Connecticut,” Austin laughs.

“Even so, I must apologize to all of you. Words cannot describe how sorry I am for putting you all in such great danger. Perhaps I never should have left Setauket,” he laments.

“If you had not agreed to do this, you would still be rotting in a cell in Connecticut, no?” Margaret reminds him.

“If you were to be a loyalist, what cause would you *really* be loyal to?” Richard asks. “I wonder how many still support the crown after feeling the effects of the occupation for so long. How many other Colonels do you think abuse their power, only to be whisked away for trials abroad, where they are always found innocent... or forgiven by their superior officers? Surely we are not the only ones who have suffered at the hands of

men like Simcoe. Is that the side you wish to see win the war? Where is this British etiquette that the loyalists are so adamant about? Not in Setauket, you can be sure of that.”

“No, you are right, but I should have at least *warned* you of the risk.”

“And then when Simcoe demanded I tell him where you were, I might have told him. He could have beaten it out of me if I knew. The only reason he stopped is because he truly believed I did not know. I am not sure I could be so convincing under duress,” Richard confesses.

“Nor I,” Margaret agrees.

She covers the bottle of spirits that she had been using to disinfect the bandages and clean Richard’s wounds, before placing it neatly back on the bar shelf.

“What is important is that we have a solution. We will just need to tread carefully moving forward,” Austin says. “It has certainly been a long day with much riding and skulking about, and I, for one, am exhausted.”

Austin brushes past Abraham to lock the door, bolting it shut for extra security.

“Just in case,” Austin says.

“Thanks, Austin,” Abraham smiles.

“If this were an inn, I suppose I could give you a properly kept room. The second bedroom has become a bit of a stock space for my business, but it still has the bed. I can move a few things around to try to make it comfortable for you,” Austin offers. “One of you can take my bed, I’ll set something up on the floor for myself.”

“We appreciate your hospitality Austin,” Margaret says. “We will try to be out of your way as soon as possible. I’ll be gone first thing this morning.”

“Of course. Now if you’d like, I can show you to the rooms upstairs,” Austin says, gesturing to the door behind the bar.

“That would be wonderful,” Margaret agrees. She stands up and helps Richard to his feet.

“Coming Abraham?” Richard asks.

“I will be up in a few minutes. I have to write to Benjamin to explain the situation. He can take precautions or use other channels to get information until we have re-established the chain of information,” Abraham explains.

“Good night then,” Austin says. He pushes open the door behind the bar, through which Abraham can see a kitchen, and a staircase leaning upstairs.

“Night.”

As the other Woodhulls follow Austin up the stairs to the spare room, Abraham digs deep into the bottom of his bag. He pulls out a well of what appears to be thin, diluted ink, and an unremarkable dip pen. Somewhere from the recesses of his bag, Abraham produces a few scraps of paper and places them on the table before him. In letters that begin to fade moments after their sentences are completed, Abraham writes:

JB¹ – June – 5 - 1779

N^o13

Your N^o7 came to hand and another observed the contents. I purpose this only to inform you of my misfortune. On the 24th of ~~Ju~~ April, John Worley

¹ JB refers to Benjamin Tallmadge’s assumed alias, “John Bolton,” which was used in their communications for further security

returned from Connecticut, being paroled by the company of prisoners (although taken in a Privateer). And lodged information against me before Coll. Simcoe of the Queen's Rangers, who thinking of finding me at Setauket came down. But happily I left out for N. York the day before his arrival.

And to make some compensation for his time he fell upon my father in a matter most shocking. I, hearing of it and his intentions, used every endeavor to defeat his design, which I happily did in a measure by a friend of mine, making interest with the General Aid², and only that saved me. But I am very obnoxious³ to them, and think I am in continual danger.

You will see the contents of the other letters and the proposals they made, and at once see the necessity of destroying these letters after perusal.

-Samuel Culper

² General or Gen Aid refers to John Andre, the British spymaster.

³ Abraham Woodhull was known for writing with a dated vernacular – even by the standards of his time. His use of “obnoxious” here refers to a slightly older use meaning “off-putting, disagreeable, or suspicious.”

June 8th

Major Andre's Headquarters

New York, New York

“Leave us, now,” Andre orders. His attendants, who had just finished drawing the blinds to shield the proceedings from any onlookers outside, scurried into the hall outside the lavish dining room. There are no guests here today, only the General, and Colonel Simcoe. Andre personally closes the large doors to the room before turning back to the table. The Colonel removes his hat and sits at one of the many vacant chairs while Andre brings a flame on a wick over from the burning hearth. He lights a candelabra upon the table before sitting himself, opposite Simcoe.

“You are supposed to ask before sitting, Colonel; you are my guest,” Andre corrects him.

“My apologies.”

“Manners, Simcoe, are what separate us from the common rank-and-file rebel. Remember that,” Andre reprimands. “Formalities aside then, what is this business in Setauket? I asked you to *arrest* one Woodhull, not plunder the other.”

“There were complications,” Simcoe explains. “I made another trip into Setauket to collect Abraham, but when I arrived he was not present. We searched the entire property thoroughly – every room, cabinet, and container, was turned out – and we found nothing.”

“‘Nothing,’ I take it, means you not only were unable to locate Abraham Woodhull, but were also unable to recover any evidence of traitorous activities?”

“No sir, there were no letters, documents, maps, or incriminating information of any kind.”

“Is it possible it was hidden elsewhere nearby?”

“We did a sweep of the property but found nothing. Granted, it *is* possible there was a cache of information somewhere extraordinarily well hidden, but my men couldn’t even begin to imagine what we are looking for. We require more actionable intelligence before we could undertake a proper search,” Simcoe says.

“And what about his father?”

“I believed Robert Woodhull knew the whereabouts of his son. I interrogated him with force I deemed fitting,” Simcoe explains. “I was able to learn that Abraham had left town for New York City the day before. I think that we should return to Woodhull’s house to apprehend him.”

“You and I are not of the same opinion,” Andre says, shaking his head.

“I beg your pardon, sir?”

“Firstly, if Woodhull has a brain in his head, he will see what you did to his house, and his family, and turn his horse right around to flee town. Then – if he truly was guilty – he will destroy any evidence that could have been valuable to us.”

“But we *know* he is doing it, sir!”

“You and I *believe* he is guilty. And in wartime, I agree that the risk of leaving a potential enemy spy in the field far outweighs concrete evidence. But have you been listening to the talk, Colonel?”

“The gossip in the towns? Yes.”

“And are the locals happy with your presence, in their homes, and churches? Do the residents of Setauket appreciate the regulars ripping apart the cemetery to make ramparts?”

“No sir, they are displeased.”

“And how do the locals react when an officer acts overzealously, and beats a man in his own home? That would displease them as well, no?”

Simcoe is silent.

“Do you know why I like you, Colonel? You are imaginative. The whole of General Clinton’s army believes they can chase the rebels up and down the coast and one day Washington will turn and fight them face on. They have little patience for unconventional methods. They also are far less concerned with the opinions of the Colonists than they should be.

“Right now we are at war with a miniscule number of the colonists, not even one of ten. And yet, we are still at a stalemate. The reason so many have remained loyal is because they believe in British sensibility over rebel brutality. Beating citizens ruins that image, Simcoe. You are not to go near the Woodhull family.”

“Does this mean you think him innocent?”

“This means I think that this is a delicate situation, and we are clearly dealing with a well-connected family. For now, I suggest you observe from afar. Perhaps keep a wary eye on the Woodhulls, Abraham in particular. If your men were unable to find the slightest shred of information to suggest his involvement with the rebels, then brute force cannot solve this problem. I am ordering you to walk away before you turn the entire town of Setauket against us.”

“I must voice my objection, General. I think it is a mistake to not pursue this,” Simcoe says, dejectedly. “Especially while we have no other leads to breaking into the rebel operation.”

“Fret not, Colonel. A new opportunity has presented itself to us,” Andre smiles. “For the discontent of the colonists is small compared to the animosity growing in the Continental Congress, and the ranks of their insurgent army.”

Colonel Simcoe raises an eyebrow and leans over the table in a manner impolite enough that under different circumstances, Andre would have cringed. He fidgets in anticipation and his fingers absentmindedly pull at the brim of his red uniform hat. He asks: “What kind of opportunity? Information of our own?”

“As you undoubtedly know, General Clinton recently raised me to the rank of British Spy chief,” Andre boasts. “While I wouldn’t normally relish in such an onerous post as ungentlemanly as espionage, I believe it has much to offer the war effort.”

“I had heard, yes. Have you made much headway?”

“Just last month a proxy brought to my attention an esteemed member of the rebel army who sees the futility of this war, and wishes to offer information

and aid – the extent and manner remaining unspecified – to us, in exchange for pay and protection,” Andre explains.

“Is he credible?”

“Far more credible, I imagine, than your *John Worley* who set you after Woodhull. No, this informant for us is a ranking officer by the name of Benedict Arnold.”

“Arnold... I remember this man. We faced his troops in battle; he has proven to be an adept leader and a master tactician. If he could be persuaded to join us after his usefulness as an informant is through, he would make a formidable addition to our ranks,” Simcoe remarks.

“Quite right, Colonel. But let us hope his usefulness is not expended too quickly; I would rather more information than more soldiers,” Andre reminds him.

“Of course. Do you require my assistance in this matter?”

“Not presently. In fact Colonel, I would prefer if you told no one of this at all; I only spoke to you to ease your worries. This operation would be ruined if word got back to General Washington that one of his commanders were considering feeding intelligence to me. Understood?”

“Naturally. I will tell no one of your design.”

“Good. Now with haste: back to Long Island and keep a wary eye on Setauket. Even if Abraham is not the culprit, someone in that town is committing treason,” Andre orders. He stands and gestures with his hand toward the door,

smiling. Simcoe gives a polite little bow, places his hat back atop his head, and strolls out of the hall in significantly higher spirits.

June 10th

The Townsend Store

New York City, New York

The shop bell rings. Robert Townsend, a few months shy of 27, adjusts his spectacles so they rest comfortably once more on the peak of his beaked nose. He turns away from the business ledger he has been carefully combing through – with some satisfaction at his profits – and looks to the door. Early morning sunlight pours in through the shop window casting a shadow of the lettering on the glass, which reads “Townsend Imports, Est. 1773,” on the shop floor. A figure partially obscured by the glare has stuck his head into the shop.

“We don’t open for another half an hour on Saturdays, read the sign,” Robert commands. For his age, Robert Townsend is an exceedingly competent businessman. He apprenticed with Templeton and Stewart until he could afford to open his own shop, and remained apolitical for the sake of his business. Or at least, he *had*, until the Queen’s Rangers took over his family home in Oyster Bay.

“Oh, but I’m not here to shop,” Abraham says, stepping into the room and out of the sunlight.

“As I live and breathe! Abraham, what brings you here?” Robert rises to greet him with a firm handshake. “Please, sit.” Robert gestures to a tall crate on the other side of the register. Abraham pulls up the crate close to the counter, and makes himself comfortable.

“Good to see you,” Abraham smiles.

“Same to you. But to what do I owe the pleasure? I know you well enough to doubt you would travel fifty miles for a social call,” Robert comments.

“No, you’re quite right. I am here on official business, so to speak. Completely off the record, and in confidence,” Abraham says.

“Understood.”

Abraham draws closer still to Robert. “Last I spoke with your family, your father was quite displeased with your current situation at home.”

“Well,” Robert shrugs, “would you be happy with Colonel Simcoe coming to your house and harassing your family?”

“I know for a fact I wouldn’t; he and his thugs broken into my house in Setauket and beat my father for information,” Abraham explains.

“Good Lord, what information could your father possibly have of value?”

“Colonel Simcoe wanted to know my whereabouts. He suspected me of being engaged in espionage for the rebels.”

“How in God’s name did you get Simcoe to leave you alone?”

“I had sworn an oath of loyalty to the British last summer, I have even smuggled for them. There was never any evidence found to convince Major Andre that I was a spy, and my cousin, Benjamin Floyd, vouched for me. He simply reminded Simcoe of these facts, and assured him I was a loyalist who wanted the war to end, same as everyone else. Simcoe and his rangers have far more important things to attend to than chasing down flimsy leads.” Abraham explains.

“That’s lucky then.”

“The trouble is, Robert, Simcoe was right.”

“I don’t understand.”

“I *am* sending information to Washington. I’ve been coming to New York a few times a month to stay at my family’s boardinghouse while I gather information about the British units, commanders, and defenses. But I can’t keep making trips into the city; I could be stopped and questioned. Someone could relay that information to Simcoe,” Abraham confesses.

Robert looks unsurprised. “I assume you would not have told me this unless you already had a decent idea of where my loyalties lie. But if you are asking me to help you, I cannot do anything to visibly oppose the British. It would be disastrous for business.” Robert wraps his middle finger on the pages of his ledger.

“I would never ask you to outwardly oppose the British. Not even I have done that. In fact, it is probably best that the British continue to believe you to be a loyal supporter and merchant. Robert, would you consider informing for the Continental Army?” Abraham asks.

Robert removes his spectacles, and says: “This time last year, I would have refused. But after what they’ve done to my home – you should see the place, Abraham – I have to say yes. They’re a menace, the regulars are. Teeming all over the city, drinking, whoring... they terrorize the rest of us.

“You know what makes me laugh, Abraham? When the fighting first broke out, nearly everyone in this city were loyal. They saw the rebels as crude, and oppressive. Everyone fancied themselves proper citizens of Britain, with proper rights. The king’s army was respected. Now? If you ask anyone – in private of course – if they’d rather

rebel rule or this total occupation... I challenge you to find a true unshaken loyalist left in the city.”

“The British have become their own enemy,” Abraham comments.

“Still, I gratefully accept the chance to resist. What the damn lobster backs have done, especially Simcoe and his rangers, is unforgiveable. I take it there are some procedures that you need to explain to me,” Robert says. Abraham nods.

“Yes, I have Washington’s instructions here,” Abraham says. He reaches into his coat pocket and produces an envelope. He opens the seal, removes the paper, and places it on the table. Robert looks it over, perplexed.

“I do not understand,” Robert remarks, raising an eyebrow and adjusting his spectacles. “This is a letter addressed to your father.”

Abraham places a small wooden box on the counter. From it, he takes out a bottle of cloudy liquid, and a painter’s brush, which he places on the counter.

“Over the course of the war, we have employed several methods of hiding our communications,” Abraham explains. “I try to write down as little as possible, only putting to paper what is absolutely necessary. To do so greatly increases the risk of being exposed should you ever be searched or questioned. In such cases where you need to make notes, I urge you to do so between the lines of ordinary letters with invisible ink, like so.” He points to the letter on the table.

“When I receive the letter, I can reveal your message by simply brushing the paper with a special solution,” Abraham demonstrates, taking the brush and dipping it into the mysterious chemical. He drags it across the paper between the lines of text

apparently written for his father. Almost as soon as the bristles touch the paper, letters appear as if by magic.

“Brilliant,” Robert says.

“This kit is for you.” Abraham slides the box across the counter to Robert.

“Bringing it into the city must have been dangerous. You seem confident I would accept your offer and not report you to the redcoats,” Robert comments.

“Were you a stranger, then perhaps I would be more cautious. But I have known you for long enough to understand that you are not the type of man to betray a friend. Nor are you the kind who would allow personal affronts such as those perpetrated by Simcoe to go unpunished,” Abraham replies. He has finished revealing the instructions on the page.

“Ah, you do know me then,” Robert grins. Then: “Let me have a look.”

Abraham hands him the letter, which Robert carefully inspects.

After he has had a few minutes to look it over, he asks: “What are all these numbers?”

“This is our code. Not all of it, not by a long shot, but enough of it that you can safely send messages to me, in Setauket. The numbers stand for different people, places, and things. Major Tallmadge’s idea,” Abraham explains.

“Benjamin is involved?”

“Benjamin is our *leader*, right under Washington. He recruited me, and agreed it would be wise to approach you about watching over New York after my own run in with the rangers...” Abraham trails off.

Robert sighs knowingly. “I understand. How though, should I get my information to you? Even with the code and invisible ink, is there not a chance the British could discover it anyway? I am unsure if I could find a courier I trust to carry the letters to Setauket, undetected.”

“I am of the same opinion, which is why Austin Roe will be stopping by your shop once a week to purchase wares for his establishment. He makes supply trips to New York City almost weekly *already*. He truly has the perfect cover,” Abraham says.

“And when Roe comes here, I can just slip him the letters?”

“Exactly. He will know what to do,” Abraham replies. “Once I return, I will explain to Roe that you that from now on he will report to you. He will also bring you more detailed instructions on what *exactly* you should be looking and listening for.”

“You say that as if Roe has been reporting to someone *else* here in the meantime. Are there other agents in the city?”

Abraham nods. “Mary and Amos, at the boarding house where you stay. I have spoken with them about this business as well. What’s more, Redcoats often frequent their establishment, so all Amos needs to do is listen to the gossip and pass it along to me,” he pauses, “well, Roe from now on.

“Of course, you can only pick up so much information from idle gossip. The rank-and-file only know what affects them directly – lack of supplies, longer shifts, troop movements – they have little knowledge of the bigger plans in place. Better intelligence means mingling with the higher-ranking officers and officials in New York. I hope that with time and comfort they will recognize you as a familiar face,” Abraham says.

“In my dealings I have come into contact with a handful of ranking officers; when the supplies run low, they come looking for supplies wherever they might find it,” Robert explains. “Although the redcoats do not make good customers. Merchants have been beaten and killed for asking officers to pay for their supplies.”

“Take great care, then, Robert,” Abraham advises.

“I know how to get by in these troubling times. I do not sell things that they could justify stealing, or killing for,” Robert says.

“I notice you started selling rum,” Abraham remarks, smiling.

“Originally I was against it. Dry imports are far easier, but it has become quite a popular commodity, and an officer likely would not want to explain to his superior that he killed a man over alcohol,” Robert laughs dryly.

“If it brings in officers for you to converse with, then better still.

“Baring any significant problems, you will not see me again until this is over. Tell no one I was here, understood?” Abraham asks. He stands up and pushes aside the crate he has been sitting on. Robert nods. “Good luck.”

Hours later, as the last few customers are leaving the store; Robert begins sweeping up the floor, dusting off the countertops. He looks over his inventory, makes a few notes in his ledger on what supplies sold well and need restocking, before stepping outside. From here, Robert can hear the shouting of the British officers ordering the lower-ranking men to perform their drills, a most hated task among the soldiers. He often heard off-duty regulars complaining about it in the taverns and boarding house where he

was lodged. Roberts locks the door and admires the storefront for a moment before turning down the street and making his way toward the Underhill boardinghouse.

Along the way he makes many of the same observations that Abraham did the previous fall; the citizens that *were* still out on the streets looked cautiously at the British soldiers, some of the more meek going so far as to cross the street to avoid walking near patrols, or guards posted on corners. By the time Roberts passed the barracks near Broadway, the street was nearly deserted. He walked quickly, not keen on drawing undue attention, and within a few minutes, reached the boarding house.

Robert pushes open the door and takes a seat, resting his legs. He looks around the room at a few Redcoats who had come in for food. He knew that it was not customary for the Underhills to serve non-residents, but exception was to be made for occupying soldiers whether they liked it or not. He also understood that he would not find the information that Abraham wanted sitting in his brother in law's establishment, otherwise Amos would have gathered the intelligence himself.

No, reports of soldier-gossip were not enough. Robert smiles to himself and leans back in his chair, excited to begin his work for the Continental Army.

June 12th

Trumbull Home

Hartford, Connecticut

The plain white house was quite modest for that of a governor; it was likely quite similar in size to Robert Townsend's family home in Oyster Bay, and far smaller than the mansion where Benedict Arnold was based in Philadelphia. The inside was not lavish, as Trumbull was not rich – he went into debt largely funding the revolution as best he could. He was the only governor who supported the continental congress, a fact that was not lost on General Washington. A small group of low-rank soldiers stands guarding the foot of the path up to the front door. The general continues past them, reaches the front stoop, and knocks.

Benjamin Tallmadge pulls open the door to admit him.

“Sir,” Benjamin salutes.

“What happened?” Washington asks. “I set out as soon as I heard from Culper.” Behind him, far on the horizon, smoke still billows skyward in wide, dark gray plumes. Before responding, Tallmadge stands aside to admit Washington to the parlor, where Governor Trumbull waits for both of them.

“We were unprepared,” Trumbull says. His eyes are tired, wrinkles etched deep into his long face, jaw set in a never-ending worrisome frown. The governor was old by colonial standards – a year shy of seventy – and would not long outlive the war.

Washington and Benjamin sit down opposite him.

“We *were* warned of the attack, we had about four days notice from Culper Junior, but we believed him to be misinformed,” Benjamin states solemnly.

“Misinformed? What would cause you to think this?” Washington demands. “How could you second guess such information if this attack was even a remote possibility? New Haven, Fairfield, Norwalk, all burned to the ground because we were unprepared!”

“Colonel Tarleton managed a successful raid on my camp a mere day after I received word from Culper. We assumed the attack plans had changed, due to some new intelligence about a higher body of troops moving toward Manhattan. We anticipated an attack by land, from the west, not along the coast.”

“Was anything taken?” Washington asks.

“A letter destined for you, which thankfully did not incriminate any of our agents; it was a fairly routine check-in. Payment to reimburse Culper for his operating expenses was also stolen, but I believe the primary objective was to capture me. Obviously this failed,” Benjamin says.

“Major Tallmadge *did* warn me later, but even the defenses we had prepared were no match. Thankfully the Redcoats were unable to penetrate far into the state. A number of costal properties were destroyed, New Haven has all but burned to the ground, but no strategic positions were taken,” The governor interjects. “The campaign was called off after less than two weeks, and the British retreated to their ships.

“We believe at this time that the costal attack was meant as a diversion to draw you out of the Hudson valley, general.” Tallmadge says. “The troops that were gathering in New York City that we assumed were destined for Connecticut would have swooped

in under the command of Clinton, and captured you while you were in the open and away from the Hudson. Had Tarleton not attacked early, we may both have been captured.”

Washington shakes his head.

“The resolve of the patriot cause in Connecticut is still strong,” Governor Trumbull assures them. “A number of our citizens have needed to relocate further inland, but we can manage.”

“What’s more, at the very least we know that Culper Junior has access to accurate information,” Benjamin says. “If we could speed up the letter delivery time, perhaps send Mr. Brewster to Setauket more often to retrieve letters. We could have reports with a greater frequency.”

“We can spare the resources, certainly,” Washington nods. Then, to the Governor: “Tell me, did the British sustain any casualties in their attack?”

“Some damage was dealt to their ships and landing parties, yes,” he replies.

“Then we must take the opportunity to follow up with a counter attack while they regroup,” the general decides.

“That could be a risk,” Benjamin comments.

“Nothing too far from New York City,” Washington assures him, “but I can safely move camp from the Hudson to New Jersey. We will still be able to keep the British feeling pinned down, while engaging their other forces.”

“This is but a temporary measure; someone else must be put in charge of the light troops in New York so that we may freely pursue larger campaigns against the Redcoats,” Tallmadge suggests.

“I agree. But I do not have time to make appointments now. If we move to New Jersey quickly, we can push out the remaining British resistance,” Washington concurs. “Full control of the state would mean we could focus out attention elsewhere.”

“Indeed. It may take slightly longer to deliver information to you, but the control gained would be worth a short-term inconvenience,” Benjamin agrees. “Can we aid you here?”

Governor Trumbull shrugs. “I am certain you will need all the soldiers you can muster if you wish to have a successful and expedient campaign in New Jersey, but...” He trails off.

“Do you require men?” Benjamin asks.

“Only for a short time, a few days while we build up and fortify a few strategic points on the water. My hope is that several small costal fortresses could deter a further British attack – or at the very least, make the move less favorable to their general,” Trumbull answers.

“I will leave a small garrison in New Haven, then,” Washington says. “Major Tallmadge will patrol with his dragoons to make sure there are no further threats while the work is being completed. He needs to remain close by to receive correspondence from our contact on Long Island, regardless.”

“Yes sir.”

“And with that, I must take my leave. I expect to see you as soon as you’ve word from the Culpers,” Washington advises. The governor and Benjamin both nod. General Washington lifts himself out of his chair and strolls to the door. “Good day,” He calls back.

“Good *luck*,” Trumbull replies.

August 5th

The Townsend Store

New York City, New York

From outside, Austin can tell the store is not empty; there are a few patrons standing near the window, trying to remember if they had forgotten to buy anything. Another few stand near the front of the store, payment ready, to purchase what they had come for. Austin hesitates.

In the reflection of the store window, he can see that a soldier on the opposite side of the street is watching him. Austin realizes he may have been looking into the store long enough to appear as if he were casing the establishment for a robbery. Not wanting to rendezvous with Robert while his store was filled with witnesses, but also not wanting to draw suspicion by turning away, Austin decides to choose the safer of the two options, and duck inside the store. Once inside, he turns back to the street and finds, to his relief, the patrolling regular has looked away.

“Good afternoon sir, I will be with you in just a minute,” Robert says to Austin with a smile, pretending not to recognize him at all. Austin nods and stands in line behind two of the other patrons. The first man has just finished paying, and leaves carrying a jar of nails.

“...No, I don't have any more of that in stock, but my next shipment arrives in four days. You can check back then,” Robert says to the next man at the counter.

“Alright,” the man replies, disappointed.

“And what can I get for you, sir?” Robert asks Austin.

Austin pulls out a list of the supplies he needs for his tavern and places it before Robert on the counter.

“Quite a long list,” Robert comments.

“I have a wagon outside.”

“Are you sure you haven’t forgotten anything?” Robert inquires.

“Oh, yes, do you have any *paper*?” Austin asks.

“You’re in luck; this is the last I have.” Robert slides a small stack of ordinary looking stationary across the counter toward Austin, and gives a little nod of recognition.

“Very good, I will go and gather your things and bring them out for you.”

Robert reaches beneath the counter and begins stacking jars filled with oil upon the counter.

“Anything, *unusual* happening lately,” Austin ventures, casting a wary look back at the remaining shopper who stands near the corner, gathering up candles.

“Nothing quite out of the ordinary,” Robert replies. “Business is excellent though. Just the other day a British officer came in and asked to buy quite a substantial quantity of ink. Not the usual kind, what you might find in an inkwell either. *Dry* ink, the sort you mix with oil to leave a mark – it is far more permanent that way.” Robert meets Austin’s eyes, and taps the ream of paper twice. “Isn’t that peculiar? I told him I didn’t have any but I could order some in for him. He ordered a startling amount and paid in advance!”

“That must be quite a profit for you,” Austin says.

“Certainly. Now if you wouldn’t mind carrying these outside, I can bring out the casks and I believe that is everything on your list,” Robert smiles.

“Yes, thank you for your help.”

Austin shells out his payment in British pounds – the Continental Congress’s money was no good inside loyalist territory – and carefully picked up the stack of lamp-oil jars. He made a second trip back into the store to retrieve the paper which, upon getting to his cart, placed into his bag of personal affects. By the time he had finished packing, Robert was rolling two casks of ale into the street beside the cart. Each of the men loaded one into the wagon.

“Thank you for your help sir,” Austin says politely.

Robert looks up and down the street, and upon seeing that it is deserted, drops the façade completely. He says, in a whisper: “Austin you need to get back to Setauket as quickly as possible, I have extremely time-sensitive information which needs to get to the General *immediately*. Do you understand? Do not delay; do not stay here another minute longer than you must.”

“Understood,” Austin answers.

“Good luck.”

**Woodhull Residence
Setauket, New York**

Abraham rubs sleep from his eyes as he reaches for the next piece of paper in the stack. He, Austin, and Nancy each have brushes that they dip into the revealing solution, which has been prepared and placed in a bowl at the center of the table. They carefully coat each paper with the solution, and then discard them in a pile on the floor. They work

by candlelight – it is pitch black outside. Nonetheless, the curtains have been tightly drawn to prevent anyone from seeing the evidence of their treason.

“At least Austin caught you *before* you went to meet with Caleb. Now he knows to come back tomorrow night to get the message,” Nancy says.

“I wish he could come back sooner,” Austin comments. “Robert seemed urgent. I rode straight through the night to get here in time.”

“Can’t come back sooner; it isn’t safe in the day,” Nancy reminds him.

“I wish Robert had just handed you the damn letter instead of hiding between a few hundred other sheets of blank paper,” Abraham complains.

“I think you have finally found someone as overly cautious as you are, Abraham,” Nancy chuckles.

“I suppose it’s not paranoia when there are *actually* people hunting us,” he corrects her.

“Not specifically us,” Austin thinks out loud, “spies in general...”

“I think I found it,” Abraham calls out. His brush stroke has brought out a fragmented line of text, still partially obscured. He quickly reaches for more solvent then brushes frantically from side to side, revealing the message. Abraham begins reading: “August... most troubling... came in to purchase...” he trails off and continues reading to himself as the others stand and peer over his shoulder.

August 4th, 1779

Dear C—,

I pray this message reaches you safely, and in a timely manner. Events have begun to unfold which I believe could lead to disaster for the patriots' cause. Today, a British officer came into my shop, demanding that the rest of my customers leave. He then asked me if I sold ink. Not the usual kind for letters either, but dry ink. The sort you mix with oils for batch printing. He wanted a substantial quantity, which I could not provide.

I sold him what I had, and offered to place an order for the rest. He agreed. I asked him if he needed stationary, and he said no; that they were receiving special paper in just a few days time. He wanted assurance that this ink would in fact print on linen-silk paper.

I became suspicious, and asked which merchant supplied it. I pretended I was curious, that I did not know where to find such stock. He explained it was coming over from Britain. Through conversation I was able to learn that several items of interest are being shipped over on a Ship called the Glencairn, and should be arriving in New York any day now. If you were to set up an ambush in the Devil's Belt, you could apprehend the ship and learn what the British are attempting.

However, I believe you would only confirm my initial suspicions: the British are undertaking a plan of mass counterfeit. The ink I supplied them with is supposed to be used with printing presses and holds up far more to wear than the ordinary variety. The paper they mentioned would

serve as a convincing duplicate of colonial currency, and – if put into circulation – could destabilize the Continental Congress’s economy.

I only hope this letter reaches you in time. I fully intend to continue to sell the British this ink, however. It would be far too dangerous for me to attempt to back out of the deal, and if I can build rapport with this official, he could feed me more useful information down the road.

Furthermore, I must inform you that I can produce naval intelligence with relative ease due to my trade dealings, but landed military information is another thing altogether. Recently, a British spymaster came to New York, and has made this nearly impossible

Good luck.

– C— Jr.

Abraham puts down the letter.

“The British are planning a counterfeit operation?” Austin says.

“Robert certainly seems to think so. Either way this could be good for the cause. If our naval forces can capture the counterfeit shipment, we may actually be able to learn who else is involved,” Nancy says.

“You’re right; Tallmadge has informed me in his correspondence that counterfeit money has been a large problem for the congress. Washington has already executed a handful of men who have been caught dispersing false bills. Interestingly enough, the Continental Congress’s money is so poorly made, the counterfeit actually looks to be of higher quality.”

Austin shakes his head. “Do you think we can get this to Washington in time?”

“He wrote it yesterday, we can get it to Caleb tomorrow night. The general could have it in hand by afternoon, day after next; maybe another day to dispatch a few ships to monitor the waterways,” Abraham counts on his fingers.

“That might be cutting it close,” Austin says nervously.

“It is troubling, yes. We might miss the shipment,” Nancy says.

“We could ask Caleb to patrol. He has a few men under his command,” Abraham suggests. “It would be an unsanctioned operation, but I find that preferable to the chance of letting counterfeit currency make its way into the system.”

“Agreed,” Nancy nods.

“Agreed,” Austin echoes.

“Alright. I need to write a report on this letter for Benjamin. Thank you for your help tonight,” Abraham says gratefully.

“Of course. Would you like help cleaning this up?” Nancy offers, gesturing to the papers, brushes, and chemicals spread across the Woodhull kitchen.

“I can take care of it, thank you. You should get home. I do not even know the hour...” Abraham trails off. “Pardon. I’m very tired; this has been quite a long day already.”

“Of course. Good luck with your meeting with Brewster tomorrow evening. The same spot, correct?” Nancy asks.

Abraham nods. "I'll let you know how it goes."

August 9th

Deck of The Deane

Long Island Sound

The Deane is a large American Frigate, one of the more powerful new additions to the growing fleet. This ship is a far cry from the whaling rowboats and privateer vessels that made up the original naval presence of the rebels. Armed with cannons, this ship is capable of a head on attack on the unsuspecting British supply ship. The deck is quiet; all the crew is on high alert, each man poised at their post and ready to pursue at first sign of the enemy. At the helm is Commodore Samuel Nicholson, beside whom stands Caleb Brewster.

“I appreciate you lending your men, and accompanying me,” Samuel says.

“No bother,” Caleb assures him, “I want to be certain that we catch this shipment. Not to say I think you incapable,” He adds.

“An abundance of caution is a good thing, Mr. Brewster. Who knows when we will have this opportunity again? I only wish we had some cover; it is a clear day. Will they not see us approaching?” The commodore asks.

“I believe the flag should be enough to deter suspicion until they are close,” Caleb points upward to the British flag that is flying from the tallest mast. “We have another ship waiting a few miles north, but the most important thing is keeping the Glencairn from turning toward Long Island. If the ship gets too close and can solicit help from land forces, or alert the fleet, we will have to retreat.”

“Of course. You say the ship is due to arrive today?” Samuel inquires.

“Not based from any kind of schedule, but a Scout saw the boat anchored further east to wait out a bad headwind. They should be back on their way to New York City by now,” Caleb explains.

“If you do not mind me asking, where did this intelligence come from?”

“That, I cannot tell you. We have an excellent source; that much I am free to say. But anything more... Wait look!” Caleb points to a spec on the horizon. Samuel takes out his spyglass and looks out.

“That is the Glencairn, I believe. We must wait for it to come closer to be sure,” Samuel says. He then yells to the crew: “At the ready! Careful. We want to be sure they suspect nothing until they are too close to turn back.”

Samuel turns the wheel, turning to close the gap between the two ships.

The crew scrambles into their positions, some nearing the cannons. They load the weapons, before stepping back a little so as to look as un-threatening as possible. The whaling rowboats, which Caleb has provided so that they could close the gap between ships even if the wind died down, move to hide behind the port side of the boat, out of view. The crew then falls silent as the unwitting enemy ship approaches.

“Aim for the masts,” Samuel orders, calmly. “On my command.”

After a few painstaking minutes, the ship pulls up along side one another.

“He thinks we are here to escort him to harbor,” Caleb says, in disbelief.

“Fire!” Samuel shouts.

A series of loud booms breaks the silence, rocking the ship as the Deane broadsides the Glencairn. The center mast creaks and topples off to the starboard

side of the enemy ship, tearing at the rigging. Some of the other shots tear through the sails, or break the gunwales. Panicked, the Glencairn's captain pulls the wheel hard the starboard side, and catches a gust of wind, pulling the ship out of range. Deckhands scurry up from the bowels of the ship armed with hatchets, hacking at the fallen mast, which is trailing in the water, creating drag and slowing the ship.

“Reload!” Samuel orders. “Prepare for the next volley!”

“It's no use, we're out of range, get after them!” Caleb shouts.

Samuel turns the wheel hard to follow the fleeing enemy. Even with a sail down, the Glencairn is still more agile than Samuel's frigate.

“We have to close the gap before they get rid of the downed mast and pick up some more speed,” Samuel says to himself. No sooner does he say this; the Glencairn's crew starts pushing the toppled mast clear of their ship, into the water. As the mast falls from the deck, it hits scrapes the stern of the ship, pushing it further off course. As the wind picks up, the whaleboats struggle to keep up, rowing frantically.

“There!” Caleb says, pointing to the side of the enemy cargo boat. He can just barely make out three crewmembers carrying a large wooden crate across the deck. As they reach the railing – which has been partially destroyed by the fallen mast – they heave the box overboard, into the water. Caleb runs to the side of the ship and yells down to his men in the rowboats: “That crate, look! Drop back and bring it aboard!”

“Yes sir!”

The men stop rowing, feathering and resting their oar handles on the gunwales until the Deane passes them by. Then they row with full power toward the crate, which is slowly sinking into the water. Caleb watches behind the ship as his men, with some effort, manage to pull the crate on board.

“My men are securing the dropped cargo,” Caleb says as he walks back to the helm.

“Excellent,” Samuel beams. “That maneuver cost them; we’re closing in!”

The Deane is now quickly closing the distance to the Glencairn, which turned too far and lost the wind. Its sails sag as it slows down. “We’re pulling aside! And...Fire!” The explosions echo across the expanse of water as the cannon fire tears into the side of the ship, doing further damage to the deck, remaining masts and sails.

“Reload!” Samuel orders once again.

“They’re surrendering,” Caleb remarks, pointing to the port side of the enemy ship. A deckhand is waving a white bed sheet over the edge of the ship.

“Excellent! Crew, board the Glencairn!”

The Deane crew runs down below deck, returning with metal hooks, lines of rope, and long wooden boards. The crewmembers cast the hooks across, digging into the banister on the Glencairn. A handful of men continue to stay on the cannons, training them directly at the deck, prepared to open fire should the British attempt to resist. The crew pulls the ropes, drawing the ships closer together until the span is small enough to bridge with the planks.

“Prepare to be boarded!” Caleb calls across to the enemy captain.

The boarding party ties off the ropes, and storm across to the enemy ship. Samuel follows behind.

“Kneel,” he orders. The British crew obeys. “Bind their hands.” The Continental Army crewmen take lengths of rope and begin tying up their prisoners.

“No one is armed,” Caleb remarks, “barely any cannons on board; they were just hoping to run the cargo in without drawing attention. In fact, I doubt many of them even know what they were carrying.” At this, the majority of the men appear confused.

“Captain,” Samuel addresses the Glencairn’s commanding officer, “A handful of your men threw a crate overboard during the chase. I need to know who they are.” The captain is silent.

“Commodore Nicholas asked you a question, lobster back. We need to know who threw the cargo overboard. Unless you want to be thrown overboard as well, you will tell us who they are,” Caleb growls.

“Alright, alright, please; it was Jonah,” the captain says, pointing to one of the men kneeling at the end of the line of tied up soldiers. “He came to me, frantic during the attack and said he needed assistance dumping something important from the hold. Two deckhands aided him, but we’d no idea what was in it.”

One of Samuel’s men emerges from below the deck.

“Found the ship’s manifest,” he says, handing a small booklet to Samuel.

He reads it, then says; “There is nothing unusual listed on here, Caleb. The crew really doesn’t know what they were carrying.”

“Alright, I think he may be telling the truth,” Caleb shrugs. “What do you think, Commodore?”

“We can not well turn them loose, either way, can we?” Samuel says slowly. “Let us take this ship and its crew back with us to Connecticut. With a few repairs, we can add it to the fleet. These prisoners must know something of value.”

“I agree. But I would prefer to take this one into my personal custody. My men and I will bring him to headquarters immediately, along with the crate,” Caleb suggests.

Samuel looks begrudgingly at Jonah, before giving Caleb a nod of approval: “Find out what he knows. I will finish matters *here*. The crew will search the cargo hold of the *Glencairn* to ensure they are not hiding anything else from us.” He turns and glares at the British captain.

“Good luck.”

Caleb grabs Jonah roughly by the arm, lifting him to his feet. He shoves the prisoner forward, causing him to stumble.

“Walk,” Caleb orders.

Jonah shuffles across the deck before carefully stepping across the gangplank. One of Caleb’s men is waiting for them on the port side of the *Deane*.

“Sir,” the crewmember salutes.

Caleb grasps the rope binding Jonah.

“I am going to untie you, so that you may climb down into the rowboat. You are useless to me if you fall and break your neck. That said, should you

decide to run, I do not require you to have service of your legs or arms,” Caleb says quietly and calmly. “We are more than eight miles from shore, in either direction. My men are armed, and you are greatly outnumbered. Now, are you going to attempt to escape?”

Jonah shakes his head.

“Good.” Caleb unties the knot. “Now down the ladder.”

Jonah grabs the railing and lowers himself down onto the rungs of the rope ladder, which has been tied to the Deane.

“You next, sir!” The crewman gestures to the ladder.

“Thank you.” Caleb follows Jonah down. Once Caleb is in the boat, his crewmember hurries down the ladder and tosses the end back into the boat. The crate, which is still dripping wet from being cast into the sound, sits at the bow of the boat. Caleb once again binds the man’s hands.

“Are you going to tell me what is in there? Or will I ‘ave to wait and open it myself?” Caleb asks. The rowers shove off from the side of the Deane, take a few powerful strokes to put some distance between the two boats, and point the bow north, toward Connecticut. Jonah says nothing.

“Ah, all the same to me. You will tell us all we ask, eventually; who you work for, what you were planning, who else is involved...” Caleb trails off.

“You rebels do not scare me. In a few months, I will be back in Britain, and *you* will all be hanging from gallows. What will become of you, indeed,” Jonah quips back.

“Hold your tongue, Tory, or we may soon find your usefulness overtaken by your nuisance,” one of the rowers laughs. “You might not see land, let alone the war’s end.” The prisoner turns white.

Caleb chuckles before turning his attention to the crate. “Now what is in here?” He asks himself.

August 16th

Washington's Headquarters

Continental Army Camp, New Jersey

“It’s paper?” Benjamin says incredulously. “All that effort for a crate of stationary?” He peers inside the open box, which Caleb has brought into the supply tent – which was really more of a tarp overhang, open on all sides. Beyond the overhang marched units of Continental soldiers, running basic drills to prepare for the upcoming battle.

Washington reaches into the container and pulls out a still soggy leaf. “No, not ordinary paper; Culper Junior was right. These are linen-fiber sheets, more durable than what you would typically see.” Washington demonstrates this point by tugging at the wet paper. It does not rip. “Good for printing money.”

Caleb picks up a piece as well, running his thumb across the surface. “This feels much softer than our currency.”

“It is much closer an imitation than we’ve seen before,” Washington says.

“I didn’t realize it was this frequent a problem,” Caleb comments.

“Oh, of course. Odds are you’ve already handled a few counterfeit bills. They are easy enough to spot if you are careful but…” Benjamin trails off. “When we drove the British out of Philadelphia we found printing presses and Continental Congress monetary templates. I am certain they have more in New York City.”

“I am glad you took this upon yourselves, Mr. Brewster,” Washington says. “I only just received Culper Junior’s message yesterday. I fear my orders may have come too late.”

“Thank you general,” Caleb says appreciatively.

“But they still have half of the materials to print with,” Benjamin recalls. “And soon they will have *much* more. Culper Junior says he intends to fill their order to gain the trust of some higher ranking officials.”

“Then I sincerely hope the connections are worth the risk. Have you finished questioning the prisoner that Mr. Brewster brought in? Can he tell us anything about what the redcoats have planned for the ink?” Washington demands.

“Jonah – the prisoner – was ordered to assume the roll of courier, and protect those supplies on their voyage to New York City,” Benjamin explains.

“From there, he was to pass the crate off to a higher-ranking officer, one who knew about the cargo,” Caleb adds. “I believe Jonah legitimately does not know who he was meant to be meeting with.”

“He has told us all he knows,” Benjamin concludes.

Washington exhales sharply. “Then we must have him hanged,” he decides. “We have done the same with the other counterfeiters and conspirators that have turned up. This is a *serious* issue that could cripple us from within, and a clear message must be sent.”

“Yes sir,” Benjamin says obediently.

“After he is executed, send word of this to Philadelphia, tell Congress of the plot that has been uncovered. They can warn the other patriots to be wary of whose money they accept,” Washington commands.

“I will see it done with haste,” Benjamin says. He gives a quick salute before disappearing into the ranks of the continental army, just outside the tent.

“Brewster?”

“My apologies. Ordinarily I would pass this on to Tallmadge first, but you have him presently occupied,” Caleb explains. He produces a sealed letter from his pocket.

“Another? So soon?”

“Culper believes he may have a new contact in New York City. He has been complaining of some difficulty gathering sound intelligence surrounding the British land forces,” Caleb elaborates.

“Pleased to hear it, Mr. Brewster,” Washington opens the letter:

721⁴– 29 – 15th - 1779

N^o 21

I met 723 (Culper Junior) not far from 727 (New York City.) Received a 356 (letter,) but on his return was under the necessity to destroy the same, or be detected. But I have the satisfaction to inform you that there is

⁴ “729” is the Culper code designation for John Bolton, also known as Benjamin Tallmadge. “29” is code for August. Decoded versions of all other numbers appear parenthetically in the letter.

nothing of importance to advise you of. There's been no augmentation by 592 (ship) of 680 (war), or land forces, and every thing is very quiet.

Every 356 (letter) is opened at the entrance of 727 (New York City), and every 371 (man) is searched. That for the future, every 356 (letter) must be 691 (writ) with the 286 (ink) received. They have some 345 (knowledge) of the route our 356 (letters) take. I judge it was mentioned in the 356 (letter) taken or they would not be so 660 (vigilant.)

I do not think it will continue long, so I intend to visit 727 (New York City) before long, and think by the assistance of a 355 (lady) of my acquaintance, shall be able to outwit them all.

Yours –

Culper, Samuel

August 20th

The Broken Barrel

New York, New York

“Are you sure this is the best place to be meeting?” Abraham asks. He raises a skeptical eyebrow at Robert, who sits across from him, sipping his ale. Robert looks around the Tavern, which is packed wall-to-wall with customers. “This has to be the busiest place I have set foot in.”

“It is one of the most popular in all of New York, yes,” Robert smiles wryly. He looks over to the bar, which is almost completely obscured by the crowds of people moving in and around between the tables. “It is not as if we can meet this contact in an alley after dark, there are patrols at all hours of the night. The nearest open space is outside New York City; that would mean passing in and out of checkpoints. I surely don’t need to tell you how suspicious *that* would look.”

“No, you are right, I suppose. It is certainly easier to move and meet freely in Setauket,” Abraham remarks. “I will admit, all these people, it will be impossible to overhear anything. What is this contact’s name?”

Robert gives another quick scan around the room. At one of the tables far from their position in the dimly lit corner, sit two British soldiers. They are only half-dressed in uniform, with jackets removed, and not paying much attention to the room around them.

“She didn’t give a name,” Robert finally answers.

“Then how are you sure we can trust her?”

Robert leans in closer and says: “She has already provided me with some information of value. I could not say in my last letter since the British have started opening everything, you know.”

“What is it?”

“I have learned the identity of the man who was meant to receive the shipment from the Glencairn. It certainly explains the increased security,” He says.

“Who?”

“Major General Andre, the British spymaster. From what I hear, he tends to have a slightly different view of conventional military strategy,” Robert explains. “And before you ask, I *have* verified her information with my other sources.”

“You mentioned these other sources, how has your progress fared in making friends with British officers?” Abraham asks.

“*Business*, is well, Abraham. After I filled the first order, and the next... The officers started bulk-ordering supplies they needed from my store, things the supply fleets can't or won't bring them,” He explains. “They do not always trust that what arrives in America from the Cork Fleet will be *exactly* what they ordered, they would rather see their wares before paying for them.

“Within the first several weeks, they invited me to attend dinner. I met another handful of naval officers, captains. One man said he was a representative

of Mayor David Mathews,” Robert says. Abraham is clearly intrigued, putting down his drink and sliding it away from him.

“You have a contact close to Mathews?”

“He is skeptical, but I believe I can build trust over time. More trading, more meetings, more confidence,” Robert nods. “Then, with a great degree of luck, we will have some extremely high value information coming in.”

Abraham smiles and raises his glass. “When is your contact coming in, then?”

“She is already here,” Robert replies.

Abraham frowns, puzzled. “Where?”

Robert knocks over his glass on the table, spilling alcohol across the table. A barmaid quickly bustles over to their table with a rag to wipe up the spill.

“I’m sorry, miss,” Robert apologizes.

The woman leans in over the table as she very slowly cleans up the spilt beer.

“Good afternoon, Culper,” the woman says to the wall. She does not speak to either directly.

“Good afternoon,” Robert replies. He is still looking across the table to Abraham.

“Clearly I cannot talk for long,” she chuckles nervously, “but I do have information for you.” She reaches into the tie-on pocket and produces a scrap of paper. “Read it later. Destroy it before you leave the city.”

“I am sorry, what is your name?” Abraham asks, after sitting, puzzled for a few moments. The woman shakes her head.

“No name, I cannot take that risk.”

“Then how can I trust you? Troops may or may not be ordered based on what you tell me, how can I put faith in that?”

“All I can tell you is that I am close to Major Andre,” she offers.

“Family friend?” Abraham inquires.

“Maid. I work *here* twice a week, but most of my time has been spent in the Major’s headquarters, since he arrived. Before that, I used to work with the mayor. I come from a loyalist family, so there was never cause for suspicion,” she says. “The things you learn when dusting the desk of a spy master...” she trails off.

“Why are you helping us?” Abraham asks. “Not to turn away assistance, of course.”

“Everyone has a reason to dislike the British. Mine is too complex to be told in a tavern,” she answers solemnly. The spill is almost clean.

“Thank you,” Robert says. He pockets the letter.

“I must get back to work,” she says, throwing the damp cloth over her shoulder, and taking Robert’s now empty glass. “But I will be here with more information on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Goodbye.” She hurries away, off to clean up after another patron a few tables away.

After she is out of earshot, Abraham skeptically asks: “Your contact is a barmaid?”

“Think about it, she has the perfect cover. She can move freely around through any rooms, search through drawers and desks, and listen at doors... If she is ever caught all she need say is that she was cleaning, or working!”

“Yes but without any kind of name? We know nothing about her! Everyone we have worked with over the past two years have been life-long friends, people we have built up trust with,” Abraham protests.

“But she does not know anything about us, she couldn’t turn on us even if she wished to. And the prospect of an agent inside Andre’s circle is far too valuable to pass over.”

“I do not dispute that, I just dislike taking risks,” Abraham shakes his head.

“We should get back to the boarding house to look at this,” Robert taps his pocket.

“We should wait around a little longer, we should not run out right after we speak with the barmaid,” Abraham reasons. “Perhaps I am being overly cautious, but when the connection is this good, extra care is sometimes necessary.”

Robert nods.

September 24th

Fort Hoop Walls

New Haven, Connecticut

“I think this has come along nicely,” Caleb says, admiring the new fortifications.

“This used to be a, what?”

“A trading house,” Benjamin explains. After Clinton’s army sacked New Haven, Governor Trumbull thought it wise to build up an outpost.”

The two walk along the ramparts of the fortress where cannons have been fitted, pointing out into the harbor, towards the mouth of the nearby river. From this vantage point, Caleb can see countless rows of sharpened pikes pointing downhill, leading all the way down the bluff to the coastline.

“They certainly won’t be getting up here very quickly on foot,” he remarks, gesturing to the land fortifications.

“We had to do away with most of the trees in the area to make them, but yes, helpful,” Benjamin nods. “They won’t get far by boat either. We ran a chain of two foot, hundred pound links across the river, just under the water. Any ship that tries to pass up into New Haven will tear a hole in the bottom of its hull.”

“Mortars on both banks, I see?”

“Oh yes, we certainly aren’t taking any chances.”

“Glad to hear it,” Caleb says. “I trust though, that you would like to review Samuel Culper’s latest intelligence.” Caleb hands Benjamin a thick letter.

“Excellent. I must admit: having this *woman* Culper Junior mentioned does seem to be improving the quality of his reports. Good thing, just as well,” Benjamin grits his teeth. “Washington has been anxious. He expects Culper’s risks to pay out soon.”

“Has he found more counterfeiters?”

“Plenty. The Continental Congress is in a panic. Apparently residents in Philadelphia have all but stopped accepting the Continental Dollar *at all* for fear of being stuck with counterfeit bills. A few more deserters have been caught trying to distribute them,” Benjamin explains. “Needless to say Washington is not happy that Culper is helping them do it.”

“Not directly. If they were not buying the ink from him, surely they could get it from elsewhere.”

“I know that, and I am certain that Washington at least partially understands that. But everyone is under a considerable amount of pressure here. The General wants me to make Culper Junior stop selling to the British *entirely*, close down his shop and stay in the boarding house full time.”

“But what about his reports?” Caleb asks.

“He believes we can get just as much information from this new agent 355. That, and, Abraham has devised a new way of making trips to the city that are turning up much more profitable intelligence, now that Simcoe has been ordered to stand down,”

Benjamin explains.

“Is that so?”

“Yes, he is making trips into New York City with Nancy. The two pose as husband and wife so as not to raise any red flags at the checkpoints. Then she confers with her loyalist relatives.”

“That cannot be as effective as having direct trade with British officers.”

“It also doesn’t give the British the tools to counterfeit our money. And even then, it has proven to be far more effective than Abraham wandering the city streets, or talking to drunk regulars in bars.”

“Can you buy him any more time?” Caleb asks. “Based on what Abraham told me, it looks like they may be near a breakthrough; close to getting accepted by the mayor.”

“That would be invaluable, but he will have to deliver soon. Can you tell him that?” Benjamin asks.

Caleb nods.

“I have to stay here for the time being, I cannot go to New Jersey to plead his case. I will send Washington my own letter with the full Culper report.”

“Will that be enough to convince him?”

“I do not think he will need much convincing, he is preoccupied right now trying to push out the last pocket of Loyalist resistance in New Jersey. After that we’ll have completely cut off the southern campaign from headquarters. It would be a huge breakthrough. He will be worrying about *that* for now, not my operatives,” Benjamin reasons. “I would tell Abraham that they have until New Jersey falls to uncover something seriously valuable. Otherwise, they can expect a recall order from Washington.”

“I will convey your message.”

“And I mean *soon*; it will not be long before Washington goes to winter quarters,” Benjamin urges. “After that, he will have months and months of uninterrupted time to ponder the exact methods, and usefulness of our different intelligence gathering approaches.”

“I understand. But it is up to Culper Junior to move things along,” Caleb replies solemnly. “I only hope that a recall would not put his safety in jeopardy. I do not think the British take kindly to merchants breaking off business with them.”

“Thank you Caleb, let us hope it does not come to that. But regrettably, I must cut our meeting short, so that I may draw up my own reports, quickly,” Benjamin says apologetically. “Good day.”

Caleb waves as Benjamin steps inside the fortress.

Fort Hoop Keep

New Haven, Connecticut

At the center of the fortress, between all of the walls, is a courtyard. In that courtyard a few temporary accommodations have been set up for Tallmadge and his men, while they oversee the completion of the newly enhanced Fort Hoop. A handful of tents litter the open space. Benjamin hurries over to his own, lets the flap fall behind him, and sits down at his makeshift desk.

The little workspace is far smaller than the General's accommodations; the ceiling is low enough that Benjamin is unable to stand at his full height, and the desk is crammed awkwardly next to his bedroll along the back. He opens his vial of special invisible ink – a precaution he always used when not personally delivering the letters, and began to write.

24th of September, 1779

Hi—

It is not my opinion that Culper Junior should be advised to give up his foremost employment. I would imagine that with a little industry he will be able to carry on his intelligence with greater security to himself, and greater advantages to us – under cover of his usual business, than if he were to dedicate himself wholly to the giving of information. It may afford him opportunities of collecting intelligence that he could not devise so well in any other manner.

Furthermore, those suspicions would become natural should he throw himself out of the line of his present employment.

Yours –

John Bolton

October 1st

Mayoral Estate

New York, New York

The parlor of Mayor David Matthews's house is crowded wall-to-wall with wealthy loyalists, military officers, and city organizers. The principal difference between this and the gathering at General Andre's mansion – though the Major himself *is* in attendance, chatting with William Franklin by the hearth – is the security; guards posted at every window, doorway, even sporadically throughout the room.

The only odd-man-out here is Robert Townsend. He adjusts his coat, and joins the gathering. Quickly, Jonathan Odell spots him, and greets him warmly.

“Mr. Townsend, I take it? I have heard such pleasant things about your war efforts from my friends at the docks,” Jonathan beams. “I’ve heard your name mentioned by the Board of Loyalists, many times.”

“Good things I hope,” Robert replies, forcing a smile. “And please, you may call me Robert. What did you say your name was, sir?”

“Jonathan Odell, thank you kindly for asking. You may have seen my work, I put out a bit of a satirical publication, drum up good loyalist sentiment in Manhattan, you see.”

“Oh you’re the poet then?” Robert nods.

“You *have* heard of me then?”

“I keep up to date with all the latest news,” Robert replies.

“Always a pleasure to meet a well-read man,” Jonathan grins. “But you surely aren’t here just to talk to me, have you met Mayor Mathews?”

“Oh, I am sure he doesn’t want to talk to me,” Robert says dismissively.

“Nonsense. He holds these little gatherings for the upstanding loyalists in the community, to show how much our support means. If you’re a guest, then you’re more than welcome to talk,” Jonathan assures him. “Allow me to make the introduction.”

“If you insist.”

Jonathan places his hand on Robert’s shoulder and guides him over to the center of the room, where David Mathews is speaking with a pair of naval officers.

“Excuse me, sir,” Jonathan interjects. The Mayor pauses his conversation. “I am sorry to interrupt.”

“Not at all, we were discussing business.”

“I thought you might like to meet Robert Townsend. He has been the one so generously supplying us with ink and stationary for our operations.”

“Ah, Robert, it is a pleasure to meet you,” David says, shaking Robert’s hand. “I must say, you have been much more reliable to work with than past suppliers. Many others have made problems for us.”

“I am just glad I can help do my duty to the British Empire,” Robert forces a smile again.

“Well we have invited you here to show you just how much we appreciate your efforts. Have you met Major Andre?”

“I—well, no I haven’t.”

“Oh, he’s quite fascinating. He is over there speaking with Governor Franklin about something or other; come, come.” Mayor Mathews points to Andre, who is engrossed in a conversation with two men. One of them – William Franklin – Robert remembers from the Loyalist Board meetings he has started attending to build credibility in the community. The other however, he does not recognize.

“I would love to,” Robert says politely. David waves off Jonathan and escorts Robert over to Major Andre.

“...No, I do not care about a proposed invasion into Canada, Mr. Stansbury; and certainly not enough to pay a thousand pounds for that information. Tell your employer that I am interested in the Hudson valley. What can he tell me about that?” Andre says, in an undertone just loud enough for Robert to overhear. “Now get out of here.”

“Goodbye, Joseph,” William bids him farewell.

Andre scoffs and takes a large, but still polite, sip of wine.

“Major,” Mayor Mathews says kindly.

“Good evening Mayor. Sorry about any unpleasantness,” Major Andre apologizes.

“Not at all, I’m sure. I just wanted to introduce you to someone. This is Robert Townsend, the merchant who has been supplying us lately. He is a true service to the loyalist cause.”

“Well then I am pleased to meet you, Robert. Colonel Simcoe tells me that he most enjoys his stay with your family in Oyster Bay. The Townsends, I hear, have been quite hospitable.” The Major shakes Robert’s hand and smiles warmly. “All I can say for *you*, is that you’ve been a great help to us, defeating the rebels. Beyond that—”

“Must be kept secret, I understand. But, anything for the crown,” Robert returns the smile.

“Ah, we share the same sentiment. Can I get you a drink?”

“Why yes, thank you,” Robert smiles.

Major Andre beckons to a waiter, who quickly brings over a tall glass of wine for Robert.

“Here you are.” Robert takes the glass, raises it, and sips from it.

“Lovely,” Robert remarks.

“We are glad to have you here, Robert,” The Major smiles.

October 6th
Bay of Conscience
Setauket, New York

Caleb glances over his shoulder anxiously to make sure his whaleboat crew is still waiting on standby to take off at a moment's notice. Abraham stands with his arms folded, while Austin and Nancy lean against the large boulder, which marks their meeting spot.

“That is *great* news then,” Caleb says, turning back to the group. “Does this leak have a name?”

“Robert says the man's name is Joseph Stansbury, he was negotiating the sale of some information about an expedition into Canada.”

“Tallmadge mentioned that to me last time we spoke. It is not supposed to happen for a while, and it was just a diversion anyway. This works even *better* for us.”

“Joseph Stansbury, that name sounds familiar,” Austin comments.

“Yes, Stansbury used to be an administrator back when Britain ran Philadelphia. When we retook the city, he came under investigation. He weaseled his way into a deal where he gets to come live in New York if he negotiates some prisoner release here on Long Island,” Abraham explains. “Meantime he can travel freely.”

“Then Washington can have Congress call off the deal, and jail him. Our problem will be solved,” Nancy suggests.

“No, we definitely *do not* want to do that,” Austin shakes his head. “Robert was pretty clear that he got this information at a closed party, high-class loyalists only. This event was held at the mayor's private estate.”

“And if Joseph Stansbury were to get arrested right after this party, it could expose Robert,” Caleb says.

“Exactly,” Austin confirms.

“Not only that, but it doesn’t sound like Joseph is the leak, he is just the errand boy. Whoever is trying to sell information is on our side, in the Continental army. We need Joseph to figure out who is giving him the intelligence to put up for sale,” Abraham realizes.

“Then do we just do *nothing*?” Nancy asks.

“What if Washington convinced Congress to give Joseph wider negotiating power, offer something else up and sweeten the deal to get the prisoners released faster. We then we can finish up the negotiations quickly and put whoever this traitor is on the defensive, force them to find a new way to get their information to New York.” Austin suggests. “At least that will stop the flow of secrets for now.”

“And this will be enough to convince Washington that Robert’s risk has paid off. I am sure this is only the beginning,” Caleb says.

“Excellent. I like this plan. Make sure Tallmadge understands the delicate nature of Robert’s position; we do not want to expose him,” Abraham says.

“I will see it done,” Caleb agrees.

Abraham hands him the letter. “Safe crossing. This is the beginning – I hope – of a flood of information for us.”

IV. 1780
Exposing the Enemy:
Complex Plans Uncovered

February 17th

British Supply Depot

New York, New York

The warehouse is rudimentary, and from what Robert can tell, the building used to be a stable before the start of the war. However, this facility was different from any of the other hastily prepared British outposts. The first thing he noticed was that they had taken the time to lay down a proper floor – at least in part of the room – so that the objects being stored there would not be damaged. What appeared to be the back access door has been braced and nailed shut to completely prevent entry.

The outside of the barn had been teeming with security, and not just British Regulars either. Robert had seen two officers on each side of the door. A small fortress surrounded the barn itself, complete with cannons, spiked walls, and British lookout towers. More senior soldiers, mostly veterans who had already proven themselves in the Seven Years' War, occupied all of these posts.

In the center of the barn, where the floor had been erected, stands something large, covered by a massive sheet to keep off dust and moisture. On either side of this mysterious object are two more guards, waiting patiently.

“Why did you want to meet here, sir?” Robert asks.

William Franklin accompanies him, and smiles warmly at the question. He answers: “I know that some of the officers, particularly Major Andre, would

likely disapprove. But I wished to show you my gratitude for the work you have done for us.”

“I have just conducted business as normal with the British Empire, I see no reason for thanks,” Robert replies.

“Nonsense. You went out of your way to sell us a specialty item, and have proven to be far more reliable than almost all of your competition. The fleet at your disposal has been incredibly useful. Now that the war is winding down, I would like to offer you an exclusive trade deal with our colonies in the West Indies,” Franklin offers. “You could freely expand, corner the market, and make a small fortune for yourself.”

“I do not know what to say. Thank you,” Robert manages. “But, you say the war is ending? I was not aware of any major developments for either side in the last few months.”

William shrugs. “Very soon, the rebels’ ability to fight will come to an end, I can assure you.”

“Really?” Robert asks, feigning excitement.

“Oh yes. It could take years to fully stomp them out on the battlefield, but what we have here will bankrupt continental congress once and for all. Let us see them fight while their own soldiers are in rebellion over lost wages, when the so called patriots cannot trade at market because they do not trust their own money, when the currency is so inflated that five pounds cannot buy a loaf of bread,” William laughs. “Quite unfortunately, a shipment of high quality paper was lost

last summer when the Glencairn was intercepted. But now we have this.” William motions for the guards to remove the cloth covering.

As the fabric is pulled away, Robert’s jaw drops. He stands with his mouth agape hoping that what he saw was not what he thought it was.

“Is that linen paper? For printing currency?” Robert asks.

“Not just a close copy this time, Mr. Townsend. This *is* the exact paper that the Continental Congress prints their money on. We have been quietly robbing their shipments to Philadelphia for the past year. Recently we hit a storage depot of theirs, it was hardly even guarded. I am sure they aren’t even aware this is missing,” William explains. “Along with the template we already have, we can make perfect, indistinguishable duplicates of the rebel currency. We have enough paper here to print more money than congress has put into circulation in the last two years. Inflation will cripple their economy and what supporters are left will be faced with surrender, or starvation.”

“B-brilliant,” Robert stammers, trying to maintain his composure.

“Don’t you think?” None of this would be possible if not for the ink you provided for us. We will start bringing the papers to the printing shop under the Loyalist Board Headquarters, next week. By summer we hope to release this into Philadelphia, at the heart of the rebel organization,” William says. He nods at the two guards, who pull the fabric back over the stacks of money.

Robert is speechless.

“How many people know of this plan?” He finally manages.

“Myself, General Clinton, The Mayor, Mr. Odell, Major Andre, the guards, obviously, and Joseph Stansbury,” William counts off on his fingers.

“You’ve managed to keep this a very closely guarded secret,” Robert remarks.

“Oh yes, you have to with this sort of thing,” William nods. “We still aren’t sure how our last effort was thwarted.” As the two walk out of the room, an idea comes to Robert.

“I—no never mind,” Robert says.

“What is it?” William asks.

“I am just curious about who knows. I know *you* have the best interest of the British Empire at heart,” Robert begins.

“And I know the same of you,” William assures him.

“But I wonder about Mr. Stansbury,” Robert says. “He is a trusted messenger employed by Major Andre, but he travels –”

“Of course he travels, he is a *messenger*.”

“I mean, is it possible, since he is the *only* one of us who leaves the city...” Robert trails off. “I am sure it’s nothing.”

Now William is thinking carefully. “He did know about the Glencairn,” he says to himself. “We will perform searches on him before he leaves the city,” he decides.

“Could you do me the kindness of keeping this conversation private?”

Robert asks politely. “I am sure my suspicions are nothing more than paranoia. I would rather Mr. Stansbury not think less of me for my suspicions.”

“Of course, of course, not to worry,” William assures him. “I will keep this in strict confidence. But thank you: it never hurts to be cautious.”

“Thank you,” Robert manages to smile.

“Now, I trust you will be at the Board of Loyalists meeting tonight?”

William inquires.

“I certainly wouldn’t want to miss it,” Robert answers.

Board of Loyalists Headquarters

New York, New York

“...Yes, a truly amazing prospect for our future,” William is saying.

Robert can only just overhear him from the stairwell. He has heard a few of William Franklin’s speeches before, and knows from experience that the man is only just working himself up into a grand performance. He has a few minutes.

Robert slips down the stairs, and through the deserted print shop. Once he was certain he was alone, Robert began searching the drawers and cabinets alongside the wall. He tried to be as quiet as possible, so as not to alert any of those in the meeting upstairs. Eventually he finds what he is looking for. One cupboard held a long and tall box. He pulls it out. Inside is an engraved plate that fits onto the bottom of the printing presses. Although it is hard to tell, it looks to Robert that this is for batch printing of money; rows and rows of congressional

dollars. It was too big to steal or damage as Robert had optimistically hoped for. No matter.

He steps out the print shop's side door to the small alley. There, as he expected, is Joseph Stansbury's Horse, tied up and ready to go after the conclusion of the meeting. Fortunately for Robert, the saddlebag was also still here. He takes another careful glance up and down the alley to be sure no one was watching. After determining that the coast is clear, Robert opens Stansbury's bag. He sees a few bits of paper, and feels a strong urge to look through them. He ultimately decides not to risk raising Stansbury's suspicion, and instead takes a slip paper from his shoe. He puts the paper between the others in the saddlebag, and closes it. Wanting to be back at the meeting before anyone noticed he was missing, Robert ducked back into the side door of the print shop.

Just a few paces from the bottom of the stairs he hears heavy footfalls approaching from above; someone is leaving the meeting early. Not wanting to be discovered, Robert quietly darts across the room and ducks behind one of the printing presses. The door to the stairway opens and closes.

Robert looks out from behind his hiding space and sees Joseph Stansbury step into the room. Without paying much attention, Joseph ducks out the side door. Robert waits to hear the sounds of Joseph's horse trotting off down the alley before he stands, slips back up the stairs, and quietly rejoins the meeting.

He gets into the upstairs room, and takes his place in the mostly empty back row.

“...We can assure you that your loyalty and continued support has not been in vein,” William continues. “The conflict will be over before the year is out. Mayor Mathews has assured me that the Board of Loyalists will help you reclaim any lost property. Your faith will not go unrewarded. If you take a look at your leaflets, in addition to another lovely piece by the talented Mr. Odell, you will find a list of items that the regulars have to ration. If *we* as a community can pull together resources, we can provide the King’s army with the resources they need to continue fighting, and help the war effort.”

He wraps up his speech, and the crowd applauds enthusiastically. As the crowd bustles out in an effort to get home before sunset, Robert decides to hang back to talk with William.

“Well spoken,” Robert compliments him.

“Ah, thank you, I had hoped it wasn’t too much,” William muses.

“Not at all. Did you happen to see Stansbury? I had wanted to talk to him about carrying a message for me,” Robert inquires.

“I believe he stepped out early, he said he had to get passed the checkpoints by nightfall. Very urgent business, apparently,” William says. He thinks about his own statement for a moment, staring off pensively.

“I shall have to find another courier then,” Robert frowns. “Off I go then, I have some business to attend to before I turn in.” This wasn’t entirely untrue; he had a meeting with Austin back at his store to provide his friend with his weekly supplies, and pass along the information he needed.

“Goodnight then,” William nods, not entirely paying attention.

Robert departs, leaving William alone with his newfound suspicions.

Townsend General Store

New York, New York

“You must be joking,” Austin gasps. He leans up against his wagon as Robert finishes loading his last crate of wares into the back.

The alleyway alongside the store is deserted.

“I wish I was. The details are in the papers you ordered,” Robert explains. “But the gist of it is that Andre plans to double the amount of money in circulation in the colonies.”

“Then inflation would rise so rapidly we would starve to death, unable to afford *anything*. No pay for soldiers, no supplies, nothing,” Austin finishes.

“Exactly.”

“How much do they have?”

“An unfathomable amount,” Robert replies. “Vastly more than was captured on the Glencairn.”

“I will get word of this to Benjamin as soon as possible,” Austin says.

March 3rd

Continental Congress Meeting House

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The Continental Congress has called an emergency meeting. Not *all* of the delegates are here, but several notable ones are: Alexander Hamilton, John Hancock, and John Adams are among those in attendance. Hancock re-reads the letter placed before him.

“This is certainly troubling,” he says in disbelief.

“How much counterfeit currency would we be talking about?” Adams asks.

“That is the issue, it would not even *be* counterfeit. If they truly have taken our paper, it will be virtually impossible to distinguish the difference between our real currency and theirs,” Hamilton explains.

“We *have* searched our depots and we do have a large amount of paper that could not be accounted for,” John explains. “And we know that this Culper agent’s information is certainly reliable. He predicted the Connecticut assault last summer, and the shipment aboard the *Glencairn*.”

“Are you sure?” Hamilton asks. “Because the countermeasure we would need to take would be drastic. It would still be harmful short term, but it would be nothing compared to the inflation the British would cause.”

“What would we have to do?” Adams asks. He looks around the room for answers.

“According to Culper Junior, the printing template the British have is from when we changed the design six months ago. That would mean recalling all currency we printed since we switched the design,” Hamilton says slowly.

A shocked silence falls across the small meeting room. Adams pushes back his chair and stands up from his desk.

“Culper’s information has been accurate. Last time we did not act on his intelligence, New Haven burned to the ground. We should not doubt him again.”

“Is there no way to steal the paper back? Or even destroy it? If the warehouse burned down, we would be cured of this problem,” Hancock suggests.

Hamilton shakes his head: “Not if the warehouse is as heavily guarded as Culper says. You would be bombarded with cannon and rifle fire before you managed to get anywhere near the door.”

“The printing template is cast in metal,” Hamilton explains. “No way to steal that either. You could hardly carry it out of the shop, let alone sneak it through a checkpoint in a saddlebag.”

“What about the agent?” Adams asks. “If we recall the money, the British will know *someone* in their inner circle talked to Congress.”

Hancock smiles. “It looks like Culper Junior has thought of this too. He says he planted incriminating documents on the person of a loyalist messenger who frequently comes and goes from the city. If anything happens, it will look like *he* is the guilty party.”

“Brilliant,” Adams replies.

“Well then, issue the order to recall all currency produced in the past six months. Contact the nearest printing shop and have them re-design modified currency on *different* paper. We can exchange it for the faulty currency,” Hamilton says. “But we must act swiftly. If the British release *any* of their duplicate money into the economy before we can correct the problem, irreparable damage will be done.”

“Let us not delay,” Adams nods.

March 17th

Board of Loyalists Headquarters

New York, New York

The shop workers are busy lining up a piece of the stolen linen paper on the press. Once the paper is secured in place, they begin carefully preparing the metal template with the dry currency ink. William Franklin supervises.

The door bursts open, startling the workers. Major Andre marches in angrily.

“What in hell did you do? Who did you tell?” The major demands.

“What are you talking about?” William asks.

Andre grabs him by the front of his shirt. “About this!” He gestures to the counterfeiting in progress. “Who did you tell about the money?”

“No one knows, just our supplier, the workers, a few of the guards, and Odell,” William answers. “Why?”

“Because one of my loyalist correspondents in Philadelphia told me they just issued a recall on all of their currency produced over the last six months,” Andre fumes. “All of this is useless, the plan will never work now!” He kicks over a stack of crates filled with paper and ink, causing them to fly out across the shop floor. The attendants stop working and back away from the press.

“I have no idea how they found out, everyone that knew is still in the city accept—” William freezes in horror.

“What?”

“Well, Joseph Stansbury left the meeting early, and some of our other loyalist friends have found him to be suspicious,” William admits.

“Stansbury?” Andre demands.

“Yes, why?”

“He carries messages between myself and a colonial informant in Philadelphia. If he is playing both sides, I’ll wring his neck,” Andre fumes. “Get out to the west checkpoint. Talk to the guards. Find out who was working the night Stansbury left and talk to him. I want to know if he was searched, and what was found on him. Understand?”

“Yes sir.”

“After that, you are to come to my office and report to me what you have found. I want this resolved by this afternoon, do I make myself clear?”

“Of course sir.”

“Then *go!*” Andre shouts.

William obediently hurries out of the shop.

Major Andre’s Office

New York, New York

Major Andre sits at his desk, frantically writing a letter to General Clinton. He must inform his superior that enemy spies have thwarted him. All the work put

into intercepting, accumulating, and stockpiling paper; all the money spent on ink, wasted. He was furious, and he knew Clinton would be as well. When he hears a knock at the door, Andre takes a loosely bound book he has been looking over, and slides it beneath a pile of letters.

“Come in,” he barks.

William Franklin anxiously inches his way into the room.

“I have done as you asked, sir,” William says timidly.

“What happened?”

“I spoke with the guards, and they were able to tell me who was working the security checkpoints on the night Joseph Stansbury left New York,” William explains. “I spoke with *that* guard, and he said that when he tried to search Stansbury, he became uncomfortable.”

“Really?”

“Yes, apparently Stansbury told them he was carrying confidential information from a ranking officer that could not be shared. The guard said he insisted, and found a few letters,” William relays.

“I know, I gave Stansbury letters to take to Benedict Arnold, but they were all in code. He would not have been able to read them if he wanted to,” Andre explains. “I trust you have told *no one at all*, not a soul about this plan?”

“Of course not, sir. But what struck me as off, Major, was the mention of a hand drawn map,” William recalls. “The patrol guard could not remember details, only that it resembled the layout of a barn, or warehouse, and that Mr. Stansbury became surprised and defensive when it was discovered.”

“Unbelievable,” Andre shakes his head. “He had a map?”

William nods. Andre slams his fist down on the desk in anger, rattling the wood frame and upsetting an inkwell.

“We do not know for sure, sir,” William stammers.

“Don’t know for sure? The man was carrying maps of a warehouse, and a few weeks later the rebels know about the money we have been keeping *inside* a warehouse. You think that this is a coincidence?” Andre demands.

“No, it could be related, you are right, but I do not think we should take any extreme action against Stansbury; this still could all be a misunderstanding, and if we anger Arnold, then we may very well lose another informant,” William reminds him.

Andre inhales deeply, and braces himself against his desk. He looks down and away from William for a few moments while he regains his composure and calms his temper. After he is collected again, he speaks. “You are right. One plan falling apart is bad enough. I cannot afford to lose on another front as well,” Andre agrees. “At the very least, we will have put the rebels on the defensive. Recalling six months worth of printed currency will be difficult, and time consuming.”

“Not to mention a tremendous showing of weakness,” William comments.

“Exactly. That much currency coming in and out of their system will still be catastrophic. *Someone* will go unpaid, we can be sure. It is a pity, we cannot use *any* of the counterfeit money?” Andre asks, knowing the answer.

“Yes and no. None of the bills that have *already* been printed can be used, and that represents almost a quarter of the paper resources we had in our possession. If the Continental Congress has any sense, they will be sure to change the design of the new bill.” William explains. “We can repurpose the paper to make more counterfeits, but it will never be the same as having a perfect copy of the paper they used. Now rebels will be able to tell the difference, if they are careful.”

“Well, let us hold on to the linen paper for a while then. It’s not worth the risk trying to have poor imitations released, but once we see what their new money looks like, the print shop can try to duplicate it and make a decent copy,” Arnold commands.

“I will notify them, and you, as soon as we have sample currency to work off of,” William replies.

“Excellent.”

“But sir, what of Jonathan Stansbury? How do you wish to proceed?” William asks.

“We cannot take rash action, you are right. We need to learn what is going on before accusing Stansbury of any crime,” Andre reasons. “In any case, negotiations have reached a somewhat disagreeable point. Arnold is demanding a ludicrous sum for trivial table scraps of information. It may be better for us if we feign disinterest and stall him for a few months. In the meantime, we can find a new, more reliable courier to do the job. When this has blown over, maybe Arnold will make an offer that I could actually bring to my superiors.”

Andre looks down at the spilt ink, which has begun pooling on his desk.
“Ah, and where is the damn maid when you need her?” He says with disgust.

April 4th

Winter Quarters

Delaware River Valley, New Jersey

“Thank you for speaking with me, as you can imagine this is a challenging time for us,” Washington says. He stands beside General Philip Schuyler at the entrance to his tent. He looks out at the camp of soldiers, who all turn their backs to Washington. A distinctly different group of soldiers walk along the ranks of the camp.

“I can imagine. I am glad the Pennsylvania Militia was able to come through for you,” Schuyler says, gesturing to the Patrolling soldiers.

“I have never had such a problem controlling these men,” Washington shakes his head. “And they were riding through camp making threats if they didn’t receive all their pay and full rations immediately. I want to pay them, but all their salary comes from my personal wealth; I simply cannot pay more without funds from *congress*.”

“Yes, but we expected this temporary shortness of money,” Schuyler reminds him. “Everyone has felt a bit empty handed since Congress issued the currency recall.”

“Yes, but at least now we have dealt with the counterfeiting problem. Had it been left unchecked, we might be faced with surrender in the next few months. We have that to be thankful for at least,” Washington decides.

“True enough,” Schuler concurs. “What exactly can I do to help?”

“I have another growing concern at the moment. Word in Philadelphia is that Benedict Arnold is a bit too comfortable with the loyalists for Congress’s liking; attending their parties, expressing his disdain for our future...” Washington trails off. “I received a letter for him asking for protection from the *patriots*, saying that they have been bothering him at his home, and that he has reason to fear for his family’s safety.”

“Protection from our own troops, that is intriguing,” Schuyler clicks his tongue.

“I need a solution, if he is left in Philadelphia, it could be disastrous for morale. Even more than back pay,” Washington gives a little nod to a nearby cluster of troops, huddled in a circle. “We could lose the city again. And I cannot let that happen.”

“Have you considered reprimanding Arnold?”

“The man has tried to resign more than once. We need him. He is an excellent tactician but terrible amid a large population.”

“It sounds as though you need to give Arnold a kind of promotion. I am not speaking of anything in rank, but more of a *lateral* move. Put him someplace he can feel useful and valued, but in a place where his complaints cannot be heard by the public,” Schuyler suggests.

“Did you have any recommendations in mind?” Washington asks.

“Have you considered West Point? The fortress itself is impossible to take – ships passing through have to come to a full stop at the river bend, nothing can get across the great chain without sinking, and approach by land is suicide. The

British know they cannot take it without unacceptable losses,” Schuyler says.

“That being said, having a good commander in the Hudson Valley, always poised to harass the British should they make another move on Connecticut, or try to take New Jersey, would be invaluable.”

Washington contemplates this.

“Do you think Congress will raise objections?” Washington asks.

Schuyler chuckles, “Oh yes. But I am sure with time they can be made to see it is far better for everyone if he is stationed up in the Hudson Valley, and out of Philadelphia.”

“I should hope that happens soon,” Washington replies.

“Soon enough, I will need to travel to Philadelphia regardless. While I am there I can talk to the Continental Congress for you about moving Arnold,” Schuyler offers. “I’ll see if I can have your back pay sorted out as well.”

“Thank you kindly,” Washington Smiles.

July 20th

Major Andre's Private Office

New York, New York

Papers litter the entire room in a fashion quite uncharacteristic for Andre. His large desk is littered with half-melted candles that have dripped wax over a teetering stack of books. The fireplace in the center of the room is dead, filled with ashes, and a few lumps of charred wood that had not completely burned. The curtains are drawn tight. A thin layer of dust has fallen over most of the other furniture – the mantle, shelves, bookcases – but the desk has certainly been in use. Aside from Andre, it is rare that anyone see the inside of this room.

The doorknob turns back and forth a few times, further in each direction, as if the person on the other end is silently trying to determine if the door is locked. It isn't. The door creaks open just a few inches, and slender fingers wrap around the doorframe. The maid enters.

She quickly pushes the door closed behind her, and gives the room a quick scan to make sure it is in fact empty. Satisfied, she steps in and begins making her way around the room slowly, dusting surfaces here and there, but never taking her eyes off the papers on the desk. Finally, she gives up the act, and darts across the room for a closer look.

“Damn,” she whispers. In the middle of the desk, marked up with ink annotations and marred with wax drippings, is a letter – or at least, what looks like one. There is not a single word on the page: the entire thing is numbers,

broken only by commas and dashes. The one thing she *can* tell about it is that the writing must be important for Andre to spend so much time studying it.

The maid hesitates and looks around again to verify that she is still alone, before pretending to clear away the spent candles on the desk while she looks for more information. As she carefully moves around the stacks of letters – all of which appear to be in code, she discovers an open book, well worn from frequent use. She thumbs through it.

“Unbelievable,” she says to herself. The book is filled with endless lines of code, a number for every relevant word in war correspondence. Towards the back, she finds a hastily written letter. The different thickness of the lines, varying slants in the characters, and a few smears, all seem to suggest that a Andre wrote a few words at a time before consulting the code again. From what the maid could tell, this was the translation of the same jumble of numbers she had seen earlier. It read:

15th of July 1780

Major,

Two days since I received a letter without date or signature, informing me that S. Henry – was obliged to me for the intelligence communicated, and that he placed a full confidence in the sincerity of my intentions. On the 13th of June I wrote a letter to you explaining my sentiments and expectations, sir, that the following preliminaries be settled previous to cooperating: First, that S. Henry secure to me my

property, valued at ten thousand pounds sterling, to be paid to me or my heirs in case of loss; and, as soon as that shall happen – 100 pounds per annum to be secured to me for life, in lieu of the pay and employment I give up for my services as they shall receive.

If I point out a plan of cooperation by which S.H. shall possess himself of West Point, the garrison... Twenty thousand pounds sterling, I think, will be a cheap purchase for an object of so much importance. At the same time, I request a thousand pounds to be paid to my agents. I expect a full and explicit answer.

The 20th, I set off for West Point. A personal interview with an officer that you can confide in is absolutely necessary to plan matters. In the mean time I shall communicate to our mutual friend J— all of the intelligence in my power, until I have the pleasure of your answer.

—Benedict Arnold

“No,” the maid shakes her head, putting the paper back in the book. “That is impossible. Footsteps approach the study door. Panicked, the maid quickly slides the letter back into the book, places the book back under the pile of papers, and begins roughly dusting the surface of the desk, making her way over to the book shelves. The door is flung wide open.

“What in bloody hell do you think you’re doing in here?” Booms Major Andre.

“I am so sorry sir, I was just cleaning room to room and your study was a mess, I—I,” the maid stammers.

“Just get out,” he scoffs.

“But I was not finished with—”

“Go!” He commands, pointing toward the door.

“Understood sir.” She looks at her feet and scurries out into the hallway.

The Broken Barrel

New York, New York

The barmaid deposits a pint of ale and a scrap of paper on the table.

“Bad news for you, unfortunately,” she says.

Robert looks up at her quizzically. She leans in.

“I found something while I was cleaning Major Andre’s study. Apparently one of the rebel officers has been selling information to the British using someone referred to as ‘J—,’” she explains.

“Joseph Stansbury, we already knew that,” Robert hisses. “We decided to leave him in play until we could figure out who it is. Besides the information was never anything *seriously* damning, and as far as we could tell.”

“What would you say to a proposed 20,000 pound deal, plus another 10,000 for lost property, and 100 a year for life?” Robert almost spits out his drink.

“I would seriously question what this informant has to offer that he thinks is worth at least 30,000 pounds,” Robert raises an eyebrow. “But I take it you found out?”

“West point is for sale, and it looks like General Arnold is eager to get rid of it,” The barmaid says. “Looks like he wants to meet with Major Andre in person before the sale occurs.”

“Do you think you would be able to find out when they are meeting?”

She shakes her head. “Andre caught me in his office once. If I keep going in there, he will eventually get suspicious. I can try to eavesdrop but it would be far to dangerous for me to search through his desk again in the near future.”

“No, you are right. The highest priority is making sure you stay where you are and remain undetected. I will just need to find another way to get that information,” Robert agrees. “Thank you for the tremendous risk you already took to tell me this.” He remembers the paper. “What is this?”

“That is what I remember from Andre’s code book. I couldn’t take anything, but I got a few key pieces of information that could be useful to you. You may not be able to break the code, but at least you will know the general subject of any letters you intercept,” the woman explains. “Now I must be off. I wish you luck.”

She leaves Robert at the table alone with his drink.

July 22nd

Roe Tavern

Setauket, New York

The only stragglers left are Abraham and Nancy, who are chatting with Austin while he cleans tables. Someone knocks at the door.

“I’ll get it,” Abraham offers. “No, really,” he insists as Austin starts to put down his cleaning rag. “Hello?” He opens the door.

“Thank goodness you’re here,” Robert pushes his way past Abraham and begins closing the curtains.

“What are you doing?” Austin demands.

“Are we alone?”

“Yes,” Nancy replies, confused.

“I am sorry, I know Austin is due for a pickup in just a few days, but this could not wait,” Robert explains. “Our contact in Andre’s headquarters, agent 355, she was able to look through the Major’s mail. Most of it was coded but she found a translated copy of a recent letter.”

“What did it say?” Abraham asks.

“Well, we know who has been leaking information now; Benedict Arnold. Damned turncoat aims to sell West Point,” Robert explains.

“I cannot say I am surprised,” Abraham says. “From what Tallmadge says, Arnold has become something of a problem. The man has tried to resign many times. He married a loyalist judge’s daughter... It is not difficult to figure out.”

“I suppose. Still, I did not think he would resort to treason,” Nancy comments.

“What I am curious about, is how he can give away West Point,” Austin says.

“Washington and Schuyler have talked with him about a promotion. They would put him in charge of all operations in the Hudson Valley, including West Point. Congress is on board; the matter is all but decided. The official appointment just has not been made,” Abraham explains.

“Well now surely not, we can put a halt to the entire thing,” Austin says. “Tell Washington Arnold is a traitor and hang him. Then the information leak stops and West Point is safe.”

“We *could* do that,” Robert says slowly. He sits on one of the tables closest to the group, and drums his fingertips on the surface.

“Or?” Abraham asks, shrugging. “I take it you have another proposition.”

Robert smiles. “Oh yes. Why take just Arnold when we can bag both of them?”

“Pardon, who?” Nancy asks, confused.

“Arnold *and* Andre. Sure, we could capture one traitor now and wait for Arnold to find a new source of intelligence, or we could bide our time and capture a traitor, and a very high-ranking British official who happens to be the enemy spymaster. That means no more mail getting searched, no more counterfeiting. The entire British intelligence operation would collapse, they would be totally in the dark.”

“How does Arnold lead us to Andre?” Austin inquires. “I am with you, this could be monumental, but we need to make sure they do not slip away.”

Robert leans in and lowers his voice, as if *now* suddenly someone can hear them.

“The barmaid says Arnold demanded to meet *in person* before he sells the base. And it looks like we’ve got time too. He’s on his way to West Point right now to give a basic security inspection before he takes over. On his way back he is going to head over to Connecticut to sell of all his property,” Robert explains. “Luckily for us, our woman on the inside was also able to catch a glimpse of the British code book.”

“What did she get?” Abraham nearly jumps up from his seat.

“She was pressed for time, but she was able to learn the code designation for Major Andre, and for Benedict Arnold,” Robert says, producing the scrap of paper from the bar. “If we get this to Washington, our couriers, and our other operatives at the letter-opening posts, we should be able to pick out letters to and from Andre and Arnold. We can work from there.”

“You know, if Brewster talks to Governor Trumbull, we could probably slow down Arnold in Connecticut, stop him from selling his property too quickly,” Nancy suggests. “He won’t want to set things in motion until his wealth is secure in Britain.”

“Excellent idea. That should give us the time to figure out when and where the two are going to meet. We have to be careful though,” Abraham cautions.

“We tell Washington, a few of our other spies, and that is *it*. We have no idea if

Arnold has ears anywhere else. If word gets back to him from one of our soldiers that we're looking to catch him, then he's in the wind. We play this cautiously, understand?"

"Yes," the other all answer solemnly.

"Now Nancy, when is Caleb Brewster due to be back in town?" Abraham asks.

July 26th

Conscience Bay

Setauket, New York

“If you were hoping for more information about Arnold, you’ll leave disappointed. He is still trying to sell of his assets in Connecticut. I wish I had more information to give you Caleb; you came at an unexpected time. I know very little about future plans, Andre is acting extremely paranoid according to Culper Junior,” Abraham shakes his head. He has been sitting on the edge of the large boulder that marked the meeting spot. He rises to give Caleb his letter. Caleb pockets it.

“Thank you Abraham, but I am here to bring information to *you*,” Caleb replies. Abraham is bemused.

“What has happened?” He inquires.

“While I was watching the British harbor, we learned that the army is preparing to move out to Yorktown,” Caleb explains.

“I do not know how what the Redcoats aim to accomplish in Rhode Island,” Abraham confesses.

“They hope to trap the French Fleet. The Royal Navy is already moving in to prevent a retreat. The French need time to fortify Yorktown against them,” Caleb says. “The British know that if they can get to Yorktown before the French set up defenses, they can lay ruin to their forces. This is a problem for us.”

“Can Washington send troops to support the French? If the British take Yorktown, all of our military support will be lost, the alliance will be ruined,” Abraham says.

“Washington cannot spare the troops. If he moves the soldiers stationed in the Hudson valley, then Britain will be free to move up and siege West Point,” Caleb reminds him.

Abraham does not respond. He stares at the ground, thinking hard for a solution. The only sound in the mid summer air is crickets, and a gentle breeze rustling the foliage around the bay. He finally asks: “Did you have anything in mind, Caleb?”

“I have an idea, but not a plan. We need to bluff, and we need to be convincing,” Caleb says. “We need to make the risk of attacking the French fleet unacceptable to General Clinton.”

“Well, after all this time I think we can safely say losing New York City would be a catastrophic loss. If there were an attack on Manhattan any troops on their way to Rhode Island would be recalled. Hell, even some of the Naval support blocking the French fleet in might be diverted back to help,” Abraham reasons.

“My thoughts exactly. We cannot risk the casualties from such an attack, but after this winter... We just have to make Clinton believe that we are *desperate* enough to try an all-out final assault on New York City,” Caleb says.

“Well, we know that Colonel Simcoe is already suspicious that *someone* in Setauket is a traitor,” Abraham reminds Caleb. “And Major Andre has been quite

paranoid since the counterfeit plot fell apart. He would probably put credence in any document he uncovered. But we cannot make this too easy for them to find out.”

“No, if an informant simply confessed to the plot, Andre may not believe them,” Abraham agrees. “What if they were to intercept a letter bound for General Washington? We know they are reading everything that comes and goes from New York. I can send a letter with some weak code to make it look like we’re trying to hide it – just use some initials and numbers to throw them off – but the point will still be clear: we know about the movements to Rhode Island. The entire continental army, and a few state militias, is waiting to swoop in and end the occupation as soon as the Redcoats leave for Rhode Island.”

“Who will carry the letter?” Caleb asks. “We do not want to compromise Austin Roe; he knows far too much about the operation. And you cannot use *any* courier. They will point to us as soon as they are captured. There is a serious possibility that whoever carries this letter will be executed if they cannot talk their way out of the situation. I would volunteer myself, but if we are on the verge of a breakthrough with Arnold and Andre, we cannot compromise the ring.”

“No, it’s going to be risky. But I think we can use Jonas Hawkins. He runs letters for me when Austin can’t. He is good on his feet.”

“Won’t they kill him if he is caught?”

“No, we are going to make it look like he doesn’t even know the letters were there,” Abraham explains. “Of course we will have to find a small checkpoint to target, one with only a handful of guards... This will require some

advanced planning. Can you come back in two days time? I will need you to bring some materials while I get everyone we need together, and we can move forward the day after.”

“Of course. What do you need?”

“A lot of hand-written letters, in invisible ink – the cheap stuff that appears with heat. The letters just need to be meaningless numbers jumbled together, but all addressed to Washington,” Abraham says. “It is very important that they are all in the same hand; we can’t have Colonel Simcoe thinking there are too many spies out in Setauket.”

“Alright,” Caleb nods. “I can do that.”

“We need a crate too, and I’ll need two of your crew members, obviously you, as well. All in my home, two nights from now.”

“I will see it done. Safe trip home,”

“And you as well.”

July 28th

Woodhull Residence

Setauket, New York

The kitchen table is crammed with chairs, and people, all gathered by Caleb and Abraham. He is standing furthest from the entrance to the room. At the opposite side of the table are two of Caleb's crewmen, who sit beside their captain. To Caleb's left sits Nancy strong, and beyond her, Jonas Hawkins. On the table is a stack of falsified spy letters, some of which are written in invisible ink. Next to the decoy letters is a map. *Beside* the table is a crate, as Abraham requested.

"Thank you all for coming here tonight, even knowing the risks of what we are about to attempt, I appreciate your bravery. But if we fail, it will not be long before Britain triumphs over us. I can tell you no more than this," Abraham says. "The less you know, the easier this plan will be. The goal is to let the British regulars to find these, and convince them that Jonas doesn't know what they are, or who put them there."

"How the hell are we supposed to accomplish that?" Jonas demands.

"You are going to play the role of merchant. We are going to fill this crate with produce from our local farms, what we can spare anyway. Inside we are also going to put the letters. It won't be anything too obvious, but easy enough to find that the British will spot it. The idea is to get caught," Abraham explains. "Once

they question you about the letters, you say they aren't yours; you're just bringing cargo into Manhattan to trade."

"But they will think I am lying," Jonas protests.

"Give them something to go off of. Tell them you saw someone poking around your cargo and you had to chase them off. Give them a description of Caleb, he is already wanted, and Simcoe will know what he looks like," Abraham says. "Now, we are going to be staging this here," Abraham points to a spot on the road just next to Oyster Bay on the map.

"Why that far out?" Nancy asks.

"Because we know Colonel Simcoe is close by, and he is paranoid. Also, drawing attention away from Setauket is a good thing; they will think the operatives have set up in another town, there will be less attention focused here. The Oyster Bay checkpoint is also one of the smallest. From our observation, it is only manned by two guards at any given time; if there is a problem they get help from the garrison in the town, not their own camp."

"Backup will take longer to arrive then," Caleb nods.

"Exactly. And that is where you two, and Nancy come into play,"

Abraham points to the crewmembers. "You will pose as family traveling into New York City, and you will be waiting behind Jonas. The idea is that you bother the guards, and make them feel rushed so they are less likely to detain him, and more inclined to just confiscate his cargo and turn him away.

"If the plan goes wrong and it looks as though the guards will arrest Jonas, then you should be able to overpower the guards, and escape to here—" Abraham

points to another spot on the map near the water, “—Where Caleb and the rest of the crew will be waiting in boats to bring you to safety. Of course, you’ll want to be sure to abandon the cargo and the letters so they think they’ve made a big find.”

“How will we know it worked?” Jonas asks.

“We won’t. We are operating under the assumption that once paranoia takes over and Andre will force Clinton to call off the attack,” Abraham explains. “Make no mistake, this will put *all* of you at risk. I am sorry that this is necessary. But what we are about to do will be one of the most important accomplishments of the Patriot cause thus far.”

“We are prepared to take this risk for our country,” Caleb nods.

“Us too,” the crewmembers nod.

“And I, as well,” Nancy replies.

“I’ll do it,” Jonas says.

“Right, let’s get to bed. I want to leave early tomorrow so we can be in position near Oyster Bay by the evening. We can escape under cover of darkness if the operation falls apart. Caleb, you and your crew can sleep here. The rest of us can meet in the field behind my house tomorrow at dawn.”

July 29th

British Security Checkpoint

Oyster Bay, New York

The checkpoint is small, but well fortified. A trench has been dug on either side of the road. At the opposite end are long sharpened spikes to make skirting around the checkpoint difficult. The road itself has been blocked off with a wooden log, lain across two more Y-shaped logs driven into the ground. An extinguished lantern that the guards would use to see at night hangs from each of the support posts. Behind the checkpoint is a tarp overhang. Under here, the guards keep a logbook to make note of suspicious travelers, and a list of wanted fugitives to keep a look out for.

Less than two hundred feet back from the checkpoint is a junction. One branches off to the road that would lead to the rest of Long Island, while the other leads into Oyster Bay, and backup for these two soldiers. Despite the lack of manpower, the checkpoint is still well fortified. According to plan, the sun is low in the sky as Jonas approaches with his wagon, looking surprisingly calm. The two guards step in front of the fence and motion for him to stop. He reaches the checkpoint and puts down the handles of the small wagon, which only bears a single crate.

“Good afternoon,” Jonas says.

“Where are you headed?” One of the guards demands.

“New York.”

“What business have you there?”

“Selling my produce. I fetch much better prices there than in Oyster Bay,”

Jonas explains.

“We’re going to have to search this,” the second guard says.

On cue, Nancy and two of Caleb’s crewmembers emerge from the path, on their way toward the checkpoint. They stand anxiously behind Jonas, tapping their feet and looking impatient. The two guards begin a pat down of Jonas before turning their attention to the Wagon.

“Will this take long?” Nancy demands.

“Ma’am you’ll just have to wait a moment,” The first guard protests.

“My brothers and I need to reach Queens before nightfall,” Nancy complains, ignoring the soldier.

“Careful with those, I don’t want you to ruin them before I can get them to market,” Jonas says. The soldiers have begun pushing around lettuce in the box. It only takes a few moments before they find the stack of papers hidden poorly along the side.

“What are these?” The second guard demands. He hands them to his partner who begins rifling through them.

Jonas feigns confusion: “What the hell are those? They sure aren’t mine.”

“Right,” The first guard says sarcastically as he reads through lines of gibberish code. “We hear that a lot.”

“I can tell you for certain they were not in that crate when I started out today. Although that would explain...” Jonas trails off.

“What?” The second guard demands.

“Can you please hurry up, we have an appointment to keep,” Nancy calls.

“Wait, please, be patient,” The first guard orders, flustered.

“Earlier, I stopped off at the edge of Oyster Bay to speak with a friend. I walked away from the cart for a moment, and when I came back, I caught a man rifling through my things. I thought he was trying to steal from me so I yelled for him to back away,” Jonas explained. “Maybe he left it there?”

“Do you even know who we are?” One of the crewmembers calls up from the line at the checkpoint.

“Our family are prominent members of the Board of Loyalists,” Nancy yells. “They’ll be displeased we’ve been treated so rudely by some low-level patrol men,” She taunts. The guards are becoming visibly flustered, but try to ignore Nancy.

“What did this *man* look like?” The second guard asks Jonas.

“Oh, I didn’t get a great look at him. But he was a big mountain of a man, long bushy beard. Rough looking,” he describes Caleb to the best of his ability.

The first guard taps the second on the shoulder: “I think he might be telling the truth. Look at this letter.” He holds out one of the papers and points to a line near the top of the page.

“W—, I have arranged to do as you asked, in sending my correspondence in the cargo of an unsuspecting traveler, who can give nothing away of our intent. I have arranged for B— to hide my correspondence with any Eastern bound

travelers in OB to be sent through M—, where it will be received by T— and brought to y...” The second man reads aloud. “The rest is a bit faded.”

“Looks like someone tried to write in invisible ink and it faded. Look at all these initials, do you think these could be to Washington?” The guards have seemingly lost interest in the group, and are engrossed with the letters.

“Does this mean I am free to go?” Jonas asks.

“We can go *around*, if you’re going to take all day,” Nancy protests.

“Sorry, sir, it looks like you were the victim of rebel spies. We are going to need to confiscate your wagon in case they left anything else behind that could lead us to them,” the first guard says.

“My lettuce too?”

“Be lucky you can leave with your freedom,” the second guard says sternly. You’re free to carry on to the city, but this must stay with us.”

“Forget it then,” Jonas stomps his foot and turns back down the path.

“Damn Redcoats, damn rebels.” The guards lift the checkpoint barricade and pull the cart through. The first guard quickly searches Nancy and the two crewmembers.

“Sorry about the wait, rebels tried to smuggle something through,” he says apologetically. Nancy simply scoffs in reply, while her companions roll their eyes and push through the gate, onward down the road. As soon as they are out of sight, the guards close the barricade.

“We need to bring these to Colonel Simcoe immediately,” the second guard exclaims, clutching the documents. The other nods in agreement solemnly.

As soon as Nancy and the crewmen know they are out of view of the checkpoint, they duck off to the side of the road and make a break for the tree line. A short walk of less than half a mile through the woods is the rally point, where Caleb and Abraham will be waiting with a boat to bring them to safety.

Townsend Residence

Oyster Bay, New York

The Townsend house sits up on a slight hill, and is a slightly bigger variation of the Woodhull home. The surrounding property has been totally stripped of all trees. The church just a stone's throw away has been refurbished into a fortress, much like the one in Setauket. Pikes that Simcoe and the Queen's Rangers had sharpened from the Townsend's orchard surround the building. A pair of guards stands beside the church door. The checkpoint guard, after being told Simcoe had gone to his lodgings for the evening, headed across the way to the neighboring house. He knocks on the door.

Sally Townsend, Robert's younger sister, answers.

"Good evening," she greets him. "What do you want?"

"I am here to see Colonel Simcoe," the man replies.

"Come in then," Sally smiles. She then admits him into the house.

To the right is the Townsend's sort of shop-combined living room, where Sally has been sitting spinning flax.

Bored looking Queen's Rangers sit in the room to the immediate left of the front door. They play cards at a small table at the center of the room. Sally leads the guard through the parlor area passed the card game, to the back room, which is serving as Simcoe's quarters and office. Simcoe sits at a small round table, which bears a hand-drawn map of Oyster Bay, an inkwell, and a few letters. In the corner is a rope-tightened bed, which has been stood up to make for more workspace.

"Colonel, this man is here to see you," Sally says politely.

Simcoe smiles at her. "Thank you. Could you please leave us?" He requests. She does as asked. "What is it? Could this not wait until I am on duty tomorrow?"

"No sir," The guard shakes his head, and produces the letters. "We intercepted covert communications at the checkpoint just outside town. I read enough to learn that this is information meant for General Washington. It looks as though it was written in invisible ink that wasn't mixed quite right. Some are in code."

Simcoe takes the letters in hand and surveys them carefully. He asks: "What of the courier who was transporting them?"

"There wasn't one sir; just a man bringing lettuce into the city to sell. He knew nothing about the letters."

"And you believed him?"

“One of the letters seems to indicate the spies are using unsuspecting travelers to carry their messages. If they are caught, they cannot give up the agents in our midst,” The guard explains. “He *did* mention something about a big man, rough looking, with a thick beard.”

“That could be Caleb Brewster, we’ve been after him for a while, but we always assumed he was operating in Setauket,” Simcoe replies.

“We released him, but took his cargo just in case.”

“Excellent. Oh, oh no,” Simcoe says. He is reading the letters, and has reached the note about the invasion. “I need to see General Clinton and Major Andre, immediately. We have a problem.”

“What is wrong sir?” The guard asks.

“I believe we have a leak of important information. And the spy problem is much worse than we believed. If Caleb Brewster is in Oyster Bay, then our former intelligence is wrong. Who knows what else we could have missed because we were looking in the wrong place,” Simcoe fumes.

Conscience Bay

Setauket, New York

“...And it looks like Jonas made it back safely as well,” Abraham re-caps.

Caleb nods and chews his lower lip. His two crewmen that helped with the operation linger behind him. Nancy stands near the tree line and the mouth of the trail with Abraham.

“Glad he returned safely. But how can we know this worked?”

“We can’t,” Abraham answers bluntly.

“But, we know that the checkpoint guards were pretty spooked. They will definitely bring that information to Simcoe, and from what we know about him, he isn’t one for taking half measures. He will want to act. We can only hope Major Andre is as paranoid as we’ve heard. Clinton cannot risk New York City for aspirations of Rhode Island,” Nancy reasons.

“Good luck on your trip back,” Abraham says.

“I will tell Tallmadge that we accomplished what we had hoped to, and that right now we just need to be patient, and hopeful,” Caleb answers.

“Good night!” Nancy calls.

Caleb waves as he returns to the boat. His deckhands get in, and they shove off. With a few powerful strokes, they are gone around the edge of the bay, into the darkness.

August 3rd

West Point Military Fortress

Hudson Valley, New York

West Point was not an impenetrable fortress, but was strong enough that the British could not feasibly take the stronghold without taking heavy losses. As Benedict Arnold would soon learn, keeping the fortress strong enough to stave off an attack involved a lot of upkeep.

West point stands on a complete s-curve in the Hudson River. All ships that try to pass north must sail past the base, come to a complete stop, and come about to go through a narrow straight. Capitalizing on this natural barrier, the rebels forged a series of three giant chains that were strung across the river, just beneath the surface. A crank inside the fortress allowed the chains to be lowered to allow friendly boats to pass, or raised to gash open the hulls of enemy ships. Of course, this chain needs to be repaired occasionally...

“...And that requires a directive from you, now that you are the commander of West Point,” the attendant explains to Benedict.

“Why is that?” Benedict demands. “Surely someone can see to that.”

“It involves disabling part of the defenses,” The attendant explains.

“While the damaged links are being removed, ships will be able to pass through the river, behind the fortress. That means making sure we have scouted far enough south to ensure the British aren’t mobilizing. It must be done in the right time, or we will be vulnerable.”

“I see.”

Benedict and the commanding officer giving him the tour of the fortress stop at the front gate. They salute to the guard at the top of the gatehouse, and the large door is pulled open. Once the two are inside, Continental Army soldiers push the gate closed again. They slide a thick beam across the door to seal it, and then salute Benedict.

The interior of the base contains a small courtyard with high, thick walls. Along the ramparts, Continental soldiers patrol and tend the cannons. Down below in the courtyard are the barracks and living quarters.

“I will consult with our intelligence gathering regiment, and scouts. Once we are certain we have safety, we can repair the chain,” he reasons.

“Sir, I advise you take action *now*. The British appear to have had a botched military operation. They sent several brigades to Rhode Island, and then ordered them *back*. Surely you heard.”

“I did. It was bizarre, they turned around and took up a defensive position facing north, as if they thought we were planning an attack,” Benedict answers.

“They are dug in then?”

“Yes sir, it seems unlikely they would mount an assault while they are still worried we are planning an attack. Now would be the opportune time to order repairs.”

“I will see to it soon then,” Benedict assures him. “In the mean time, I would like to move some of the patrol men from the fortress, down into the

Hudson valley to patrol. After we have a garrison further down the valley, we can work on repairs without worry.”

“Sir, are you sure? We need a large amount of personnel to—”

“That was an order, soldier,” Benedict commands.

“Yes sir.”

Benedict looks around the interior of the fortress, making mental notes. He then returns to his own private quarters within the base. Off of the main courtyard is a door that leads to the inner walls of the base, and a narrow hallway. In here, the more senior offices have their own private quarters. Benedict finds his room and sits down at his desk. Once he is sure the door is locked and he is alone, he takes pen and paper, and begins to draw. He maps out a complete diagram of the base’s interior walls: where the cannons were positioned, where the guards patrolled, and where the walls were overdue for repairs to be scheduled. He admired his handiwork in creating the map, which would allow an attacker to quickly sack the fortress.

Once he is satisfied, he pulls out a drawer in his desk, removes a false bottom, and withdraws a small box that he puts on the tabletop. Inside is a small codebook. He begins to write.

September 5th

General Clinton's Headquarters

New York, New York

Clinton's office is the same one formerly used by General Howe, prior to his recall to Britain. The headquarters is inside a fortified mansion just outside of Manhattan. Most of the building is well guarded, but within Clinton's office, the General and Major Andre speaking in private, trying not to be overheard. The two are seated on opposite sides of a large oak desk.

"I hope this time you have brought good news, Major. I recalled the entire invading force in route to Rhode Island because *you* informed me of an impending attack on New York City. We needed that victory," Clinton says sternly.

"Sir, it is more than likely that once the rebels saw that our army had come back, they canceled the plans of an invasion. If you had not issued a recall, they may well have attempted to storm New York City," Andre hastily explains.

"And what of the counterfeit operation?" I have an appointment with Robert Townsend later on to cancel his ink orders and try to sell some of it back to him. We cannot afford to simply toss pounds at these ventures of yours with little hope for payoff. The war is costly enough as it is."

"That may have been a question of the wrong person knowing *too* much," Andre explains. "We believe the courier delivering messages between myself and

Benedict Arnold may have overheard details, and given them to the Continental Congress in exchange for leniency.”

“Have you at least rectified the situation?”

“Joseph Stansbury, the courier, could not be hanged, for fear of upsetting Arnold. We need his cooperation, sir. Instead we halted communications for a few months and proposed new couriers; William Heron and Peggy Shippen,” the Major explains. “I trust them far more than Stansbury. Consequentially, the gap in communications seems to have him panicked, he was much more willing to negotiate a price when we resumed correspondence.”

“And how are the negotiations?”

“Well. Arnold assumed command of West Point in early August, and he has kept me up to date on the workings of the facility. It appears his command has been well timed as well; the Great Chain is due for repairs,” Andre says. “With some coordination, Arnold says he can have the chain taken in for repairs at the same time as our attack. We could bring a 50-gunner up the river and lay siege to the northeast wall.”

“What about the soldiers in the fortress?”

“He has begun thinning out the forces across the Hudson Valley under the guise of scouting missions and reconnaissance. He has told his lower ranking officers that he wants to set up a wide net in case of attack, before the repairs begin. He may even be able to get a few of our men inside the fortress in disguise before the invasion,” The major explains.

“Brilliant. And what price did he demand?”

“He originally wanted 30,000 pounds, 20 for the base, and 10 for his lost property. Then there would be another 100 pounds per year as pension,” Andre recalls. “But after our pause in correspondence, I was able to talk him down to just the 20,000 with no indemnification of losses, plus a pension and a small stipend for his courier. He was able to journey back to Connecticut to sell off most of his land holdings. I helped him make arrangements through a broker in London. The better part of his worldly wealth was moved overseas. Although we had to be secretive about it, Governor Trumbull seemed suspicious of anyone buying or selling land. Our dear friend told him he needed the money to pay his debt to the Continental Congress, and help finance his campaign. Made himself out to be a real patriot.”

“Well done,” Clinton praises him. “What is your next move?”

“Arnold insists on meeting in person to settle the final details of the plan, he wants to meet near Dobb’s ferry. I received information with his letter accepting our terms.”

“Was this letter delivered by Peggy as well?”

“No, she was unavailable. He had to use William Heron. I sent him back with an acceptance letter, but I believe he plans to be at Dobb’s Ferry regardless,” Major Andre explains.

“Excellent. I will tell our forces in the area to prepare for your arrival then,” Clinton says.

“No, sir. We still aren’t *certain* who leaked the information about the Rhode Island attack, or the counterfeit scheme. We have suspicions, but someone

in our ranks could just as easily be betraying us. I will attend this meeting alone, save for my personal crew, whom I trust to sail my ship. Please, for the sake of the plan, tell no one of our design,” Arnold pleads. “You and I both know we cannot afford to be thwarted like this again.”

“Agreed, Major Andre. Choose your crew wisely,” Clinton advises.

“I will. And when I have a plan and a date in hand, you will be the first one to know, I assure you.”

Fort Hoop

New Haven, Connecticut

The troops are gathered in the courtyard, performing drills. In broad daylight with high visibility, only a handful of lookouts are needed on the walls to watch for incoming ships. Colonel Nathaniel Haynes is sitting beneath a canopy tent in the middle of the fortress, watching his militiamen practice.

“Sir?” A lookout timidly asks, approaching him from the gate-side of the base.

“Yes?”

“William Heron is here to see you.”

“From the Connecticut assembly? Bring him over.”

“Yes sir.” The guard runs off and returns leading Heron to his commander.

“Thank you soldier, that will be all,” Haynes dismisses him. “What can I do for you Mr. Heron?”

“I am in a bit of an awkward position, Colonel. I do not wish to incriminate anyone, however, I would rather err on the side of caution than let something of importance slip passed me unnoticed,” Heron says.

“Out with it then,” Haynes urges.

“On my most recent trip to West Point, I met briefly with General Arnold. He asked me to carry a letter for him, back with me. I was meant to bring it into New York City. I protested, but he assured me it was for the best interest of the patriot cause: negotiations with the British Major John Andre. He told me it was something to do with negotiating the release of a group of our people who had been caught on the wrong side of enemy lines. I was assured safe passage,” Heron explains. “At first I was unperturbed, but once I neared New York City I was concerned. I—I read the letter he sent.”

“And?”

“It was in code, written completely numbers, and with no letters. I was suspicious, so I copied it over,” Heron says. He hands the Colonel a scrunched up piece of paper, covered with numbers. Hayes looks it over, frowning.

“I certainly do not recognize the code,” he admits. “It is not one of ours that I know of, but I can ask our spymaster, Major Tallmadge, next time he stops by. Thank you for bringing this to me Mr. Heron.”

“Of course.”

“But if you could – would you mind *not* telling General Arnold about our meeting, just in case?”

September 11th

Dobb's Ferry

Hudson Valley, New York

Major Andre emerges from below deck of his small single-mast sloop, "The Vulture," and into the afternoon sun. The ship sits low to the water, has small amounts of rigging, and operates with very few crewmembers. The deck is flat with no cabin or habitations, designed to be fast, nimble, and difficult to hit with cannon fire. Andre strolls to the stern of the tiny ship to speak with the captain – a member of his own personal crew.

"How much longer until we reach the meeting point?"

"Just a few minutes, sir," the captain replies. "Will we be docking?"

"No, I would prefer we drop anchor and remain ready to depart, just in case something goes awry," Andre explains.

"Of course," the captain nods. He whistles and snaps his fingers at one of the few deckhands. "Ready by the anchor," he orders. The crewmember shuffles to the bow.

As the Vulture comes to a small bend in the river, Andre sees a figure on the shore. The man is careful to cover his face, and stands just at the edge of the tree line.

"That'll be him," Andre says, looking toward the figure. "That's Arnold. But I would prefer if we travel further up the river and come about, just in case we need to leave in a hurry."

The captain makes eye contact with the man by the anchor line and shakes his head. “Hold off for just a minute,” he commands. Then he turns to Andre. “I can turn right up here and then our portside will—”

An explosion booms across the river with a deafening roar. Something whizzes past the sloop. Another ship is coming around the bend and has spotted the Vulture. Andre turns just in time to see the figure retreating into the trees. The meeting will not be taking place here.

“Lower your sails and prepare to be boarded, or we *will* open fire,” the other boat’s captain calls.

The Vulture’s own captain looks to Andre for orders.

“Do as he says, look, it’s a British gunboat,” Andre says. He points to their flag. Sure enough, as the other ship approaches, they can see the whole of the crew is wearing British army uniforms. “They just didn’t know we were coming,” Andre explains.

The crewmembers obey, lowering the sails and drifting alongside the gunboat. Then, all those aboard – Major Andre included – line up along the gunwale with their hands raised. The gunboat hooks the Vulture and pulls the sloop close with their ropes before sliding across the small wooden bridge to board.

“Who is in charge of this vessel? What is your purpose? No boats are allowed this far north without express permission and advance notice to the British army,” The gunboat’s captain barks.

“I am in charge. I am Major Andre, and you have made a terrible mistake,” Andre replies, putting his hands down. He produces his credentials.

“You have just interrupted a meeting, and fired upon a superior officer.”

The captain looks perplexed.

“Put your hands down,” Andre orders his men. They obey, and fall out of formation. The gunboat captain is flustered.

“I—we did not know you were coming, I was not notified of any meeting that would be taking place near Dobb’s ferry,” he manages.

Andre moves in closer until he is toe to toe with the captain.

“Firstly, you *will* address me as *sir*, or *major*. Secondly, you were not notified because this meeting was meant to be secret. You’ve set back our operation by weeks – time we do not have,” Andre fumes. “Now get off my ship before I have *you* brought before General Clinton to explain this situation *personally*.”

“Yes, Sir.”

September 17th

Woodhull Property

Setauket, New York

Abraham peers out the window to be sure no one is on the road in front of his home. After confirming there are no passers-by or British troops moving to and from the village green, he steps outside and skirts around the perimeter of his family home. Once he is completely out of view, he walks briskly across the field behind his house. After he is out of view from the path, Abraham sets off crossing the large open field. After a few minutes walk – in the same general direction he would head in to get to the conscience bay – he reaches what he is looking for.

Toward the edge of the field, there is a clump of unruly weeds, which still manage to blend in with the surrounding grass. Abraham bends down to inspect them. Concealed in the brush is a small wooden box with a tiny lock. He takes out his key, and opens the container. From inside, he takes a single letter with his code name scrawled across the front of the envelope: “To Mr. Samuel Culper – urgent notice.” He tears open the seal and manages to get through a few lines before nearly dropping the document.

“Damn,” He whispers to himself. “I need to speak with Caleb.”

He replaces the Culper letter with another, which contains instructions from Washington to “Culper Junior.” Satisfied, he hides the dead-drop box back beneath the weeds, even covering it with a bit of dirt, before standing up and hurrying back to work on his next report. As he rounds the side of the house, he

can just make out the silhouette of Nancy Strong hanging her wash on the clothesline across the bay. He counts four pocket-handkerchiefs beside a single black petticoat.

“Excellent timing,” he says, relieved.

Underhill Mill

Setauket, New York

“Thank you for coming further than usual,” Caleb says. The pair stands beneath a stone arch bridge that allows for crossing over the thin southern straight of Conscience bay. Next to the bridge is a ruined millhouse, which has fallen into disrepair. The building belonged to the Underhills, who left for New York City after their property was ruined during the initial occupation of the town. The bay here is surrounded almost entirely by thick marsh grass that grows up through the water. In the grass nearby along the west side of the bay, Caleb’s men sit crouched between the blades with the boat.

“You came at an excellent time Caleb. I just received word from Austin. We cannot be certain of anything yet, but something is wrong,” Abraham says.

“What happened?” Caleb asks. He leans against the arch of the bridge.

“Culper Junior heard an interesting report. A few Redcoats he knows say a gunboat fired on an undocumented ship, up the Hudson near Dobb’s ferry. The

captain boards this tiny little sloop and as it so happens, Major Andre is on board,” Abraham explains.

“If a British Major wants to head up river, why doesn’t anybody know about it?” Caleb asks.

“Because, as it turns out, they were on an important and classified *meeting* – that’s according to Andre of course. The Major was apparently quite angry, made mention of having to explain himself to General Clinton that things had gone wrong,” Abraham explains.

“Could he ‘ave been talking about Benedict Arnold? He went *up river* to meet with someone, and it was too secret to tell the other British guards,” Caleb reasons. “I could hardly blame him; they’ve had so much information leaked. What surprises me is they didn’t get this paranoid sooner.”

“We don’t know if this involves Arnold, but it’s a possibility. That’s why I want you to take this to Tallmadge and see if he has heard anything,” Abraham says. Caleb moves to take the letter from him, but Abraham retracts his hand. “And be careful. The more anxious the Redcoats get, the more dangerous they are to us.”

“I am aware,” Brewster says gruffly, yanking the envelope from Abraham’s still outstretched arm. “I’ll make sure this gets to Tallmadge safely. You should get out of here; this spot is a bit closer to town than the others. No reason to linger.”

“Night,” Abraham says. He steps out from under the arch and tiptoes carefully through the grass and reeds, up the bank, and back onto the path that

runs over the bridge. From the high ground, he watches Caleb creep back into the stalks and hops into the rowboat. His crew gets in as well and shove off, disappearing into the night.

September 19th

Fort Hoop

New Haven, Connecticut

Inside the walls of the fortress, Caleb Brewster, Benjamin Tallmadge, and William Heron are all huddled in Colonel Nathaniel Haynes's tent. They are seated on thick tree logs around a plank table. The furnishings are basic, but more numerous and permanent than Washington's camp, which has to be broken down and moved around more often. At the center of the lumber chairs is a desk, made from plans of wood laid over a barrel.

"Thank you for joining me," the Colonel says to Benjamin. "Well, us, he gestures to Caleb and William.

"Of course. What has happened?"

"I suppose I'll let William start," Haynes reasons.

"Thank you sir. I am part of the Connecticut assembly, you may know that much already. Last month, I was asked by Benedict Arnold to carry a message for him. I became suspicious and made a copy, which I brought to Colonel Haynes," William explains.

"Neither of us could make sense of it," Haynes interjects.

"Exactly, but then we heard news from Brewster..." William trails off.

Caleb picks up the story: "I went in to get the latest Culper report – which I have for you here – and got some odd news from Culper Junior. Says the

redcoats fired at Major Andre on accident. He was sneaking up the Hudson for some important meeting.”

“That new information, with William’s letter, made me think it was a meeting with Benedict Arnold. We wondered if you have any way of decoding the letter that we may have overlooked,” Haynes asks. He places the letter William had brought to him a few weeks prior on the desk, and slides it to Tallmadge.

Benjamin looks over the page, which bears almost exclusively numbers.

“I could be wrong, but in early summer, Culper Junior sent me a few code words an agent had managed to learn at great personal risk; nothing extensive unfortunately, but enough to confirm whether our suspicions are correct. From there we can plan our next move.” While Benjamin is talking, he rummages through his satchel in search of his code booklet. He finds it, and from within takes a scrap of paper. On it are written two names: Arnold, and Andre. Beside each is a number designation; similar to how the Culper code functioned. Below the names is a third line that reads W. Pt. Another number is beside this as well. Benjamin holds the key to the letter, first checking the first and last words.

“There, and there,” He points, matter-of-factly. “This was definitely sent from Arnold to Andre.”

William looks too. “Look, here, that’s West Point.”

“This letter must be negotiating something to do with the fortress,” Haynes realizes.

“I’m afraid you were right, gentlemen,” Benjamin says solemnly.

“What now?” Caleb asks.

“We know that they were probably trying to meet. If Andre was as anxious about it as Culper Junior says, then he will try to meet again soon. We should watch the Hudson. They cannot meet in New Jersey, and they cannot meet in Connecticut. Benedict Arnold is fairly limited in how far he can travel without someone noticing,” Benjamin reasons.”

“But we cannot tell *anyone* that we suspect Arnold,” Caleb reminds him. “If you must, just have patrols informed of a possible British attack up the river. Keep them on look out, but mostly in the dark.”

“I can have my dragoons personally watch the area. Let us not delay. I do not want these two to slip through our fingers,” Benjamin says.

“What should we tell Washington?” The Colonel demands.

“Washington knows we suspect Benedict to some degree, which is why he put him at West Point. He believes that if Arnold has no one with which to discuss his loyalist sentiment, he will simmer down eventually. What we cannot afford is losing him to the British. West Point seemed impregnable, so Congress stationed him there. At least now there is one less person to stir up the Philadelphia loyalists and create animosity toward the Patriots,” Benjamin explains.

“But you hadn’t figured on Arnold trying to sell the whole damn fortress,” Caleb remarks.

“Exactly. Washington does not know any specifics we have uncovered about this plan. I do not think the General is the gambling type: he would want to

arrest Arnold immediately, and we would lose our opportunity to apprehend Major Andre. He would simply retreat to New York, out of our reach,” Benjamin says.

Colonel Haynes raises an eyebrow warily. “What would happen if we are unable to apprehend either of the men?”

“Then I will take responsibility to Washington. But let us hope it does not come to that; for then we will have far bigger problems than placing blame,” Tallmadge answers.

“Aye,” Caleb nods.

“Agreed,” William says.

September 21st, Late Night

Hudson River

Hudson Valley, New York

Benedict Arnold sits on the stern of a long rowboat with a lantern in his lap. Four New York Militia footmen sculled the boat – each man sitting in a line and holding two oars – and sat in silence. Arnold holds the tiller and guides the boat’s course.

“Why are we sneaking about, sir?” One of the soldiers asks between strokes. “This is *our* territory.”

“I have a meeting of great importance that would do a great service to the revolution,” Arnold replies. “You are doing right by your country in being here. But the fewer people that know of this, the better.”

The soldier makes no reply. The next half hour is marked by silence, save for the gentle drips falling from the oars onto the river surface, and the subtle splash of the oar blades cutting into the water to pull the tiny boat forward. Every time they would pass the lights of a rebel camp, Arnold would place the lantern beneath his seat to diminish the light they gave off, and avoid detection. Although the militia footman was right – they *were* in friendly territory – Arnold had no desire to explain to another captain or camp of soldiers why he was journeying so far down the Hudson; the increased scrutiny might have made it impossible to meet again for months. He didn’t think he could hold off the chain repairs for that

long, and if either side made significant gains in battle, he feared Major Andre might try to renegotiate the deal or table it altogether.

Finally, Arnold whispers: “We have arrived, I’m going to bring us in *here*.” He maneuvers the boat close toward the shore, and the men gunwale their oars to let the craft drift to the bank. The man at the bow of the boat hops out into the shallows and catches the boat before it can collide with the shore. The rest of the crew follow his lead and disembark. They then lift up the boat and drag it onto land. From under the seats, the militiamen take a canvas cloth that they can use to conceal the boat.

“I will be back in a few hours, but this meeting could be a long one. Keep watch, and be prepared to leave for West Point as soon as I return,” Arnold commands. The militia nod in a silent show of understanding.

“Good,” Arnold says, taking the lantern with him, and leaving the rowers in near darkness, lit only by starlight. He walks up the bank and off into the woods. None move to cover the boat immediately: the man holding the canvas seems to be hesitating.

A few minutes after Arnold disappeared, a rower finally breaks the silence: “I don’t like this.”

“Me neither,” the man holding the canvas cover agrees.

“What should we do?” A third asks. “I know we have our orders but this feels wrong. I would rather face Arnold’s disapproval than die to friendly fire.”

“Agreed,” The first man says.

The second crewman stows the canvas back under the seat and says: “We should leave. We can head back to West Point and tell Arnold a patrol came by and we didn’t want to compromise his mission.”

“Not a bad plan. Let us go before someone *does* happen upon us,” the fourth rower agrees. They quietly climb back into the boat and ready their oars. The bowman shoves off and takes his place. The militiamen take three hard backward strokes to push themselves away from the shoreline, and begin the much more difficult task of rowing upriver, leaving Arnold stranded.

Joshua Hett Smith House

Stony Point, New York

The Joshua Hett Smith House – later known as the “Treason House,” – overlooked an important crossing in the Hudson River, and was as decent a meeting place as any for Arnold and Andre. It was located roughly 15 miles south of West Point, so Arnold could be away from his command for a brief period of time. It was less ideal for Andre, who would have to travel much further, and through mostly enemy territory, to reach the meeting. Despite some risks in traveling to the location, the owner of the property had flipped allegiances multiple times over the course of the war while spying for both sides, making him a good neutral candidate to host the meeting.

Benedict Arnold, alone, walks the winding path up the hilltop to the home. The building is square; two floors high, with a long front porch and a boxy annex shooting off to the right. In this addition to the home, a light burns in the window. Major Andre is waiting for him.

When Arnold reaches the door and finds it unlocked, he lets himself in and bolts it behind him.

“Good evening, General Arnold,” Andre calls from the next room. Arnold follows the sound of his voice to a kitchen table lit by a handful of candles.

“To you as well,” Arnold replies. “May I?” He asks, motioning to the chair opposite the British Major at the table.

“You may, thank you for your courtesy,” Andre replies with a sly grin.

Arnold sinks into his chair, and places his satchel on the table. From within he begins to produce pieces of paper – maps, drawings, technical specifications, and letters – which he lays out across the table. One shows a diagram of the stronghold’s weak points and cannon positions. Another shows liberal distribution of troops across the entire Hudson Valley in small sporadic camps that can easily be overwhelmed. One of the letters is from Washington, thanking him for the troops he has spared to the Continental army, further diminishing the standing army garrisoned at the base. Another thanks Arnold for the sale of munitions, and contains price negotiations for more supplies he has been selling off from West Point’s cache for personal profit on the black market.

“These are documents you may find helpful,” Arnold says, making a sweeping gesture over the table. “I have diluted the garrison at West Point, sold

off our supplies to make a prolonged defense impossible, held off repair orders, even. You have the maps of our weaknesses and my personal guarantee that you can take the fortress with minimal losses.”

“What about the potential for reinforcements?” Andre asks coolly.

“You needn’t worry about that, Major. Washington placed me in charge of the entire Hudson Valley so that he might turn his attention to ventures elsewhere. Help will be too far off to save West Point,” Arnold explains.

“How do you propose we attack? Even with minimal troops, many obstacles surround the fortress that would make an attack slow and perilous for General Clinton’s men,” Andre asks. Benedict shakes his head.

“All this in time, Major, but first, I require my payment. I am afraid that until then, I can say no more, in defense of my own interest. You understand, of course, that even with the precautions I have taken, I can recall all forces back to West Point in less than three days time should you decide to walk away,” Arnold threatens. “Be assured, you will find it *quite* impossible to take West Point without my assistance, even with these advance measures in place.”

Arnold is about to issue a curt reply, but bites his tongue out of politeness, and care for the negotiations. Instead, he reaches for his own bag beside the table, and places six stacks of British pound notes on the table. After he is finished, he places a much smaller seventh stack next to the rest.

“For you,” Andre offers an explanatory gesture to the bulk of the money, “And for your courier.” He pushes the smaller pile forward. Arnold begins counting the money. After he makes his way through two of the stacks he begins

shaking his head. At the fourth stack he begins muttering to himself angrily. When he finishes the fifth stack he picks it up and slams it back down on the table.

“This is far short of the agreed price, *Major*,” he fumes.

“Six thousand pounds is a great deal of money, General. You will be paid in full, but *only* if this operation is a success. This is payment in advance. The remaining 14,000 will be given to you once our flag flies over West Point,” Arnold explains. “You did not seriously believe I would bring you everything before you have even honored your bargain, did you? Do you think me mad, Arnold?” Andre raises his voice.

“No, sir.”

“Good. Your actions are an excellent start, General, and you will make a fine addition to the British army once your service as an agent is complete. Do not ruin your prospects. You have my word you will be paid for a successful mission. Now, if you can carry on explaining the plan?”

September 22nd, Early Morning

Continental Army Outpost

Verplanck’s Point, New York

The sky is still dark in the hours before sunrise when a watchmen rushes into the Colonel's tent to wake James Livingston, the man in charge of the small outpost.

"Sir," the soldier calls urgently, "Sir!" The watchman places the lantern by the Colonel's cot and taps him on the arm.

"Wh—what?" Livingston jolts awake and leaps out of his bedroll. He rubs sleep from his eyes and slides his feet into his boots. "What is it? What's happened? I told you to only wake me for an emergency."

"Sir, we must've missed it in the dark earlier, but it appears there is a ship moored near the other side of the river. We wouldn't have noticed, but it appears one of the crew is walking on board with a lantern. Ordinarily I wouldn't think much of it, but we were advised there could be a potential attack coming up the Hudson," the watchman reminds him.

"Right. Show me, show me," he says wearily.

The lookout brings the colonel to the lookout point near the river where some simple battlements and a row of cannons have been set up. He hands Colonel Livingston a spyglass and points out to the horizon. "There."

Livingston looks and is able to make out a twinkle of light from across the water. Faintly, he can also see the outline of a small sloop. A few silhouettes roam back and forth on the deck, impatient. One of the apparent roaming crewmembers holds a lantern. He paces the deck, and finally settles near the front of the boat. The light allows Colonel Livingston to read the nameplate on the ship.

“‘The Vulture,’ that name sounds familiar,” Livingston says. He passes the spyglass back to the watchman. “What do you make of it?”

“It’s not one of ours. They haven’t announced their presence to us. It could be a threat,” the guard reasons.

“And we *were* told to be on high alert. Wake the rest of the outpost, I want the cannons loaded and trained on The Vulture. Understand?”

“Yes sir.”

Within five minutes, a group of groggy soldiers forces themselves awake before taking their battle stations. They carefully load the cannons and take aim at the enemy ship, which still sits on the Hudson, docked and waiting for Major Andre to return from his meeting. All the while, the Continental base has managed to stay quiet, and hide their lantern lights from the opposite shore. The shadows are still moving around on board the enemy ship, still totally unaware of the rebel outpost.

“Hold your fire until my command, then I want you to fire until that ship is disabled, do you understand?” Colonel Livingston orders in a hoarse whisper.

“Understood,” the soldiers nod. They then resume loading the cannons, and begin piling up back up ammunition next to their gunning posts.

Joshua Hett Smith House

Stony Point, New York

“...And then we can attack from here?” Andre asks.

“Exactly,” Arnold replies. The candles have all burned down significantly over the last few hours while the pair have been pouring over maps and drawing up battle plans. Droplets of wax stain some of the documents, but neither seems too perturbed by this.

“There is still the matter of that damned chain. If we’re to attack from the North then we need to get our galleons around the bend of the Hudson, here, where the defenses are less built up. We could modify a 50-gunner, point the bulk of the cannons to the port side, and sail alongside the fortress for a broadside. That should suppress incoming fire while our troops disembark. But for this plan to work, the chain has to be lowered,” Andre reminds him.

“I can do one better. I’ve ordered repairs to be done on the chain on October 19th. From then until at least the 24th, the chain will be out of commission and lowered for repairs. In emergencies we have a string of logs that can be thrown across the river in an emergency. But that could be easily sabotaged and overcome. I would attack in that window. This should leave you an opportunity to attack with greatly diminished defense capabilities. Beyond that, I am not sure when I would next be able to reliably disable the chain. If I postpone the repairs, my men may become suspicious. They still believe I harbor some degree of loyalist sentiment, I do not wish to give them further reasons to doubt me,” Arnold says.

Major Andre looks over the plans carefully. “With more than a week to plan, yes, I think we can mobilize our troops. It will be tight, but we can take care of this. I’ll just pack my things, take these maps, and head back to New York. In the meantime, you just have to keep—” A series of loud booms ring out in the distance like a far-off thunderstorm. “What the bloody hell was that?” Arnold demands. He rushes outside and comes around the house to the edge of the cliff.

In the distance, just a ways down river, cannon fire and muzzle flashes illuminate the dark early-morning sky. Even from this distance, Arnold and Andre can still hear a great deal of shouting echoing across the water. There is also the occasional crashing, splintering, and creaking as something large and wooden takes repeated barrages of cannon fire.

“What’s going on?” Arnold asks, jogging to keep up with the Major.

“They’re firing on my ship, look!” he points. Emerging from a gap in the tree line is the Vulture glowing in flames. The crew scramble to put out fires out on the deck while retreating further down river.

“It looks like you can’t get back by boat anymore,” Arnold clicks his tongue. He thinks, and peers down over the bank to look for his own boat. “No, no, no,” he shakes his head angrily.

“What?” Andre demands.

“My boat has gone too, they must have taken off when they heard the cannons.”

“We’re both stuck here then?”

Arnold thinks for a second before answering: “No, I can make it to the nearest militia camp on foot and take a horse back to West Point, say I was out checking security. I am more worried about you, but I think I might have something. Come inside with me.” He takes the British spymaster by the arm and leads him into the house away from the battle scene behind him. The sky now glows in orange and white flashes in the distance.

Back inside, Arnold begins rummaging through his saddlebag. He pulls out a small set of documents.

“I brought these in case of emergency. Take only what you absolutely need to recreate our battle plan. If you think you can remember it, don’t bring it; you will need to hide everything you take with you. These,” Arnold waves the documents before Andre, “will let you pass for a Continental Army regular. I’m glad you had the sense not to come to the meeting in uniform. You are going to need to lie your way through any checkpoint you hit on your way back down to Manhattan. The journey could take a few days.”

Andre has already begun folding up select maps he will need for the invasion.

“Hopefully not that long,” he says. “I have a rendezvous point down river. The Vulture will retreat and wait for me there. That is, unless she sinks, or the crew are captured.”

“I am sure it will not come to that. But best be cautious on your way back; do not reveal yourself to *anyone* until you are certainly in British territory,” Arnold warns. He begins searching the kitchen and finds a few loaves of bread,

and some cheese for Andre's trek back to New York City. "I am sure our friend won't mind," He adds, handing the food to Andre, who hastily shoves it into his bag.

"Thank you for your cooperation, and assistance in my escape, General. If I make it back safely, then we shall be seeing each other again in just a few weeks time. Good night," Andre says. He shoulders his pack, puts the fake documents Arnold provided him with in his pocket, and heads out the front door, letting it swing shut behind him. Benedict Arnold turns away and looks instead out the rear window, where across the river he can just make out the glow of torches and lanterns flickering to life in the nearby outpost.

Continental Army Outpost

Verplanck's Point, New York

The air around Colonel Livingston is thick with plumes of smoke, and reeks of sulfur and gun smoke. Soldiers around him cheer in celebration. Across the river, the badly damaged – but still floating – "Vulture" is hastily retreating. They can see it plainly now, thanks to a few fires burning on the deck that the crew is scrambling to put out. By now, a few lanterns, which soldiers are carrying back and forth to the ammo caches to bring more cannon balls and powder, illuminate the outpost.

“Let’s not celebrate just yet, men. I still want to know who was on board that ship, and what business they had this far north. We have specific instructions from Major Tallmadge to send word to him should we discover any suspicious activity. I want a message sent to him, and I want search parties fanning out to cover the valley, look around the area to see if the ship dropped anything or anyone off. There is *no* time to lose, gentlemen,” Livingston orders.

His men obediently take up their muskets and lanterns before running off into the woods in search of any additional threats. The watchman who woke the Colonel begins saddles up his horse and rides off towards Benjamin Tallmadge’s last known location.

Hudson River’s West Bank

South of Stony Point, New York

In the back of his mind, Major Andre had hoped he would be able to catch up with The Vulture on foot, flag it down, and sail back to New York City with relative ease. That hope quickly faded with the rising Sun; he could see his sloop, still smoking, zipping off into the horizon. With a tailwind and the downstream current, the ship makes excellent time on its way to the rendezvous point. The small amount good news was that Colonel Livingston’s search parties would be unable to capture the crew.

Before the sun comes up, Major Andre manages to cover a decent amount of ground. He passed the Verplanck's Point outpost hours ago and seen the place bustling with activity. He has also narrowly avoided several teams of rebel soldiers searching the woods for anything suspicious. Andre knows he possesses falsified paperwork that should allow him to pass through most security checkpoints, but he is unwilling to test this on high-alert patrolmen who are actively looking for something out of the ordinary. Twice he has ducked behind bushes to avoid rebel search parties.

But he doubts he will be able to hide as easily in the daylight; without the cover of darkness, and with more alert Continental soldiers and New York Militiamen on the lookout, he knows it will only be a matter of time before he is forced to use the alias that Benedict provided for him.

When Andre sees yet another riverside outpost teeming with activity, he decides to take a path further inland, sacrificing the small amount of visibility he had on his fleeing ship, but allowing himself significantly more cover. For a few miles, travel was far easier in the tree line. He had to head further west once to skirt around the edges of another Continental outpost – no doubt set up by Benedict Arnold in his efforts to dilute the amount of troops available to defend West Point.

Eventually, however, his luck ran out.

“Oy!” An unfamiliar voice calls from behind him. Andre turns about, fully expecting to be caught.

“Yes? What is it?” He asks, cautiously. In his haste to bypass the last outpost, he had an eagerly picked up his speed, and paid far less mind to his surroundings.

“I’ve been trying to catch up with you for a quarter of a mile, what’s your hurry?” The Continental soldier demands.

“Oh?” Andre asks, trying to discern the man’s intentions. The soldier stares at him, confused.

“We are supposed to be out in pairs, remember? Colonel Livingston’s orders, not mine. Why are you so eager to be out by yourself? I thought I might join you to save you a scolding when we make it back to Verplanck’s Point,” the patrolman offers helpfully.

“I’m terribly sorry, I must have been a little tired when the orders were given. It was so damn early,” Major Andre lies quickly. “I took off from camp back there because I thought I heard something; I didn’t have time to get a partner before investigating. I didn’t want someone to slip off because we could not get him in time.”

“Well?”

Andre looks bemused. “Well, what?”

“Did you find anything? I can help you comb the area; we can cover ground faster. If this turns into something big, of course, you get full credit when we tell the Colonel.”

“Ah, no, it wound up being just an animal, I think,” Andre says hastily. The soldier begins to eye Andre warily.

“I do not recall seeing you at camp this morning, Mr.—, what did you say your name was?”

Andre knew that the longer this conversation carried on, the more likely he was to be exposed by the prying soldier. He realizes he has no choice but to use the documents that General Arnold had given him, and hope for the best.

“Here,” Andre says, presenting the soldier with his papers. “My name is Sargent John Davenport, I was sent here with a group of Connecticut Militiamen to cover a few gaps in security along the river.” He pauses and waits anxiously while the soldier looks over the forged documents, trying not to seem too bothered.

“All right, this seems to be in order. My apologies for doubting you, Sargent, but you never can be too careful. Now, have you searched along the riverbank here, yet?”

Andre thinks for a moment. This interaction has gone on longer still than he wanted it to. He needs to be on his way down river, not traipsing through the woods with a curious Continental foot soldier.

“I am more worried I may have caused a bit of a panic, running out of camp after those noises like that,” Andre says meekly. “Do you think you could return and tell them it wound up being nothing of importance so they don’t waste time sending more men this way? I can search down this bank and circle back to camp after I clear this area.”

“That would contradict orders, John.”

“I know, I know. I just think it would be faster, and could save us a great deal of time locating the real threat – if there even is one – if we split up.” Andre adds a little chuckle for good measure to help sell the rouse.

The soldier ponders for a moment before replying: “Yes, yes, you’re right of course. We need to focus on finding whoever was sneaking about, more so than following orders to the letter. I’ll report that all is quiet here. Do you think we should turn our attention down river even further?” It was perfect.

“I honestly doubt we will be able to catch up with that damned ship we saw this morning,” Andre laments. “Besides, anyone who would’ve been on board is probably laying low near Verplanck’s, or Stony Point. Only a fool would try to run through deep enemy lines in broad daylight. No, if you ask me, we’ve cast the net too far south. We ought to double back and look for any discrete hiding spots we might have overlooked on the first pass. It was dark when we started searching, after all,” Andre says.

“I have to say, I am of the same opinion, but what can I do but follow orders? It is not my decision to make,” the soldier says sadly. “No time, though, you’re right: I will return to camp to give Colonel Livingston the all-clear. You give another sweep to be safe, and report as soon as you are able.”

“Excellent,” Andre says. “And stay safe out there; we’ve no idea what we could be up against,” Andre warns.

Continental Army Outpost

Verplanck's Point, New York

Benedict Arnold had waited what he thought to be a reasonable amount of time before making his way to the nearest crossing point, and reporting to the outpost, which had fired, on Major Andre's sloop. From there, he knew he would be able to borrow a horse, and return to West Point without raising too many eyebrows.

When he arrived, the place was in chaos: most of the soldiers were missing, no doubt out searching for the man Arnold knew to be the British spymaster. Fortuitously for Benedict Arnold however, it appeared that presently, the Colonial forces had no idea who or what they were searching for.

Benedict searches the camp, trying to find the Colonel in command amid the commotion. After scanning the outpost for a few minutes, he spots Colonel Livingston standing over a handful of watchmen who have stayed behind to clean the cannons, and stand guard in case someone else attempts to make their way up river toward West Point. Livingston takes notice of Arnold as well.

"General," he greets him politely, although somewhat confused. "What brings you so far from the base? I was not expecting a visit, but I can brief you as to our current situation."

"Please do. I was out on a security spot-check to be sure all of the guard posts I set up were properly stocked and alert," Arnold lies. "While I was up river

a few miles last night, I heard cannon fire, and all manor of commotion – sometime in the early morning. I made a note of it and decided to investigate at first light, in case there was cause for serious alarm.” He then folds his arms, and waits for an explanation. “Well?” he asks.

“One of our lookouts raised the alarm in the early morning hours. He saw an unidentified sloop moored out on the West Side of the Hudson, just south of Stony Point Crossing. He came to fetch me, and sure enough, we were able to identify it as the enemy ship; ‘The Vulture.’” Livingston explains. “We are all under strict orders from Major Tallmadge to be wary of possible enemy ships making their way up the Hudson, particularly this close to West Point. Once our artillery crews were awake and ready, we fired on The Vulture and forced her to retreat down river. We were unable to stop their escape, but we believe the boat was here to pick up someone, or something.”

“You have sent your men to search the area, then, I take it? Arnold asks. He tries to hide the worry in his voice.

He knows that if Andre is apprehended, he will never see the rest of the 20,000 pounds he is owed. Beyond that, if the captors offer Andre his freedom – or life – in exchange for information, he would be able to sell out Arnold. The last thing that either of them needed was Continental Soldiers actively searching the Hudson valley for his co-conspirator.

“That is correct. Every man I could spare is combing the area,” the colonel informs Arnold. Benedict exhales, trying to remain calm.

“Have you called for backup, or reinforcements, or reported this to *anyone*, besides myself?” Arnold asks the colonel.

“Why, yes. As soon as we disengage from firing upon the ship, I sent a messenger to Major Tallmadge. I thought he might need to know, sir,” Colonel Livingston answers. Arnold ponders this for a moment, trying to think of a way to regain control of the situation and allow for Major Andre’s clean escape.

“Well done,” he finally says. “Thank you for taking these measures, colonel. But I think you should recall your men. Whatever they are looking for is likely long gone, if they truly have been searching all morning, as you tell me. To be honest, I am more concerned about the possibility of a follow-up attack.”

“Follow up?” Livingston asks, confused.

“Oh, yes.” Benedict replies solemnly. “Just think about it, colonel: the British send one lone ship to draw your attention. Then, you send out a search party and scatter your men looking for possible enemy forces while they return in greater numbers. Meanwhile, Verplanck is far understaffed, and quite ill-equipped to handle a larger attack. They could overrun your entire command post, colonel.”

“Do you truly believe the Redcoats have such an operation planned, General?” Livingston asks, wide eyed. He appears horrified by the thought that a larger attack could be successful because of his own hasty decision.

“Well, of course one can never be certain about this sort of thing, but it is within the realm of possibility. And since Major Tallmadge has already warned us to be on high alert, perhaps it would be best to err on the side of caution.”

“Very well then, sir. If that is what you think will be the safest course of action, then I shall send out my watchmen to bring back the others, at least until Major Tallmadge arrives,” Colonel Livingston reasons. Arnold grimaces inwardly at the thought of the Continental Army’s own spymaster showing up to help investigate, but is able to maintain a calm façade.

“Excellent, very good,” Arnold commends him. “But might I ask one small additional favor from you, colonel?”

“Certainly.”

“If anything suspicious is found, I would like to be notified immediately. If anyone is apprehended, I would like you – or whoever finds him or her – to send *all* prisoners taken to my personal custody at West Point. Do you think you can you do that for me, please?” Benedict Arnold asks politely.

“Of course,” Livingston replies obediently. “I can put the word out to all the patrolmen and guards in the area that they are to report to you directly if they take any prisoners. I can be sure the other Colonels are notified as well.”

“Excellent. Might I borrow one of your horses, Colonel? It seems that my rowers fled when they heard the sounds of your cannon fire last night; I have had to continue the rest of my inspections on foot. It has taken far longer than I would like.”

“I can arrange that for you, General. One of the lookouts will see that the rest of your needs are met, if you do not mind. I have much to do in little time if we are to be prepared for the possibility of another attack,” Livingston says. With

that, one of the remaining guards guides Benedict Arnold to the stables nearby, where he is given the reins to an already saddled horse.

“Do you require further provisions?” The soldier asks.

“No, I think that will be all, thank you.”

Arnold mounts the horse, spurs its sides with his heels, and rides off along the path out of the outpost, heading north back up the Hudson.

Tallmadge’s Dragoons’ Campsite

Lower Hudson Valley, New York

By the early afternoon, Benjamin’s men have already conducted a handful of patrols of the area to ensure it is still safe to maintain their current base of operations. They are close to enemy lines above New York City, and are often bothered by wide-sweeping British patrols.

Benjamin himself is busy reading over intelligence reports brought in to him by his Dragoon reconnaissance teams. Despite the large number of people still milling around the encampment, it is very quiet; only the sound of the light breeze and the distant flowing of the nearby Hudson River break the silence.

For this reason, when a new noise approaches, Benjamin pauses in his work to listen. Cautiously, he puts down his pen, and the documents before him. He reaches for his flintlock pistol, which sits beside him on the table. The sound

grows from a low and undistinguishable rumble to that of light thunder. A few moments more and Benjamin can make out individual footfalls of a fast-approaching horse, galloping toward their camp. Other men have begun to notice as well, and are taking up their arms and moving behind cover. Benjamin takes his place behind a thick oak tree just as the horse reaches his camp.

“Hello?” The rider calls out. “I’m looking for Benjamin Tallmadge. *Major Benjamin Tallmadge.*” Benjamin peaks around the tree and gets his first look at the messenger. He is a young man, no older than twenty, wearing a Continental Army uniform. It is the same watchman from the Verplanck outpost who discovered the presence of The Vulture.

Carefully, Benjamin steps out from his hiding place.

“Afternoon, soldier. I am he. What can I do for you?” Benjamin asks. The soldier dismounts his horse as the Dragoons emerge from cover, slowly lowering their weapons once they have determined that the visitor is not a threat.

“I was sent by Colonel Livingston, at one of the Hudson outposts just south of West Point,” the man explains. “We had a brief skirmish in the early morning hours with a suspicious vessel marked ‘The Vulture.’ I was told to come find you, and notify you, on account of your information that the Lobster Backs may attempt some kind of attack on the fortress,” the man explains. Benjamin looks at him in awe.

“The Vulture, you say? Then you have done us all a great service in coming to warn me; for that is British Major John Andre’s personal boat,”

Benjamin explains. The watchmen turned messenger stares back at him, wide-eyed.

“I could not say so much in my instructions, for fear that the information would be leaked and find its way back to the British. If Andre knew we had identified his ship, he would change his transportation, and we would never be able to find him,” he adds. Murmurs erupt across the crowd of Benjamin’s men.

“Then what do we do?” One of them asks.

Benjamin addresses the group: “Gentlemen, this is the opportunity we have been waiting for these past few weeks. We must cast our net and apprehend Andre before he is able to return to New York City.”

“How?” The messenger inquires.

“If you managed to fire upon The Vulture, then you have likely separated Andre from his crew; we have not seen any ships pass by us headed down, back to the British held territory. You could have missed it in your haste to make it here in time. Regardless, this means the crew are waiting for Andre to rejoin them before returning to Manhattan,” Benjamin reasons.

“He must be between here, and Stony Point, where you first saw the ship,” another one of Benjamin’s men chimes in.

“Exactly. He would have no hope of escape if he travels any further North. If we alert the others, send word to all the checkpoints, we can catch him out,” Benjamin says, excitedly.

“Then let us not delay!” Another one of Benjamin’s soldiers cheers. The group of Dragoons begins breaking down their meager accommodations and

preparing to travel. The messenger fidgets uncomfortably and wrings his hands, awaiting orders.

“Thank you,” Benjamin says, finally addressing him. “I know you have already well-exceeded what is expected of a watchman, and you must be exhausted, but can you carry my orders to all the check-points north of here on your way back, as quickly as you can? The more men we can mobilize, the better our chances are of apprehending Major Andre,” Benjamin waits patiently for a response.

“Of course, I can leave immediately, to mobilize our forces,” the messenger says with little delay. Without waiting to be told a second time, the soldier mounts his horse again, and sets off back along the riverside trail once more at breakneck speed.

September 23rd

North of Sleepy Hollow Checkpoint

Westchester, New York

Andre had made decent progress over the course of the past day. He made camp well off the trail once to sleep for several hours, not long after he had passed yet another set of patrolling guards. Despite his best efforts to outwit the Continental Army men into calling off their search near Stony Point, it seemed

that further south, near Tarry Town, the search had resumed with increased vigor. The brief respite he had won for himself had ended.

Thus far, he had only made use of his forged documents twice. The first occasion was to rid himself of the first footman he encountered not long into this journey. The second was to pass through a secure checkpoint that made a requirement of it, demanding to see identification of all passers by.

He was trying to avoid using the papers, so as not to seem too eager with his documents, waving them around like Nathan Hale had. He was sure to give himself away like that. But perhaps his biggest mistake was failing to take notice of his exact location. He was too tired to properly register the sounds of voices drawing nearer to him from the path ahead, until it was too late to hide.

“What do we have here?” One voice demands. Andre stands straight up, now fully alert, if not a moment too late. He opens his mouth to speak, but is immediately silenced. “Ah, ah, I’m sorry, before you say anything, I’m going to need to see some identification. Papers, please,” The man orders, more than asks. As Andre reaches for his false documents, two more men come into view behind the first. None of them have any kind of identifying uniform, or rank markings.

“There you are, that should be everything,” Andre offers, hand outstretched. The man takes his papers and looks them over. Andre tries to make some conversation to put the patrolmen at ease.

“Are you out here as part of the search party as well, Mr—,” Andre says, trailing off.

“Paulding, first name’s John, same as yours, I see,” Paulding replies. “And yes, the three of us have been out here all day. These are my fellow soldiers, Isaac Van Wart, and David Williams,” Paulding says.

“Pleased to meet you,” Andre greets them politely. The men do not answer immediately. Isaac and David both look over John’s shoulder at the papers Arnold had given them, confused.

“And you say you’ve been out here on assignment, with a search party?” Isaac inquires. He scratches his beard pensively as he looks at Andre. “From which camp are you based? I’ve never seen you down in Westchester, where the rest of us are stationed.”

Andre inwardly panics for a moment before remembering the cover story that he had used on the other guard he had encountered back at Stony Point. He says: “I am Sargent from the Connecticut Militia. I was sent here to help with the search. My partner went to report back and carry a message to the Verplanck’s Point outpost, further upriver,” he lies again.

“You are from the Connecticut Militia, you say? And now you are fighting with the Continental Army here, in the Hudson valley?” David asks. Andre is beginning to grow uneasy; he had only thought up so much back-story while he was on the trail. He wanted to keep it simple to make it easier so the details would stay consistent. But with this many questions, he was convinced his cover identity would soon begin to unravel.

“That’s all we needed to know,” John replies. Andre breathes a sigh of relief, but his relaxation appears to be premature.

“You see, we never said *we* were from the Continental Army,” Isaac says slyly. “The three of us are British scouts, searching for enemy combatants. Have you any idea how far *south* you are? You’ve stepped well beyond friendly territory, rebel.”

David begins searching around in his bag for a few moments, until he finally pulls out a length of rope. He advances toward Andre, saying: “I wouldn’t worry, you are too low ranking to know anything of value. You will probably be held for a few weeks on a prison ship before you’re exchanged or ransomed – if you live that long, that is.” Then David pauses for a moment, as if waiting for something. Arnold takes the bait.

“Wait, wait, no, hold on, hold on. I am a British soldier, just like you lot,” Arnold confesses.

“Of course you say so now,” Isaac says, rolling his eyes.

“No, honestly, I am Major John Andre. I was up river for a meeting by my ship took heavy fire from the rebels. I was forced to make my way back on foot,” he explains. “Listen to me, it is critical that you help me get back to New York as swiftly as possible; I am carrying important information that I need to be bring to General Clinton immediately or—”

It is not until this moment that Andre realizes his terrible blunder. David, now having heard all the information he needed, advances toward Arnold and binds his hands. All three of his now captors grin triumphantly.

“I told you this would work, didn’t I?” John Paulding chuckles. “I knew it!”

“You were so desperate to be rescued, wandering around in the woods for nearly two days, you would confess to the first man who came to you and said he was British,” Isaac laughs.

“Go ahead and search him, David,” John orders. “He said himself he was carrying important information for General Clinton.”

David begins to pat down a disgruntled Andre. He turns out the Major’s pockets and finds nothing important. Meanwhile, Isaac begins going through Andre’s bag, pulling out his food rations and taking them for himself.

“Nothing in his bag,” Isaac reports to the others.

“Nothing in his pockets, either,” David adds.

“Try his shoes,” John suggests. “If I were hiding secret something I might put it there.”

David removes Andre’s boots, and reaches beneath the soles. Sure enough, David pulls out a few leafs of paper, which he then passes to John. John then reads through them quickly.

“I would have to study them further, but these appear to be maps of West Point,” he says, incredulously. “How in God’s name did you get your hands on these?”

Andre says nothing, and instead looks straight ahead.

“*Now* he stops talking,” Isaac scoffs. “No matter, we can bring him back to Colonel Jameson, now. After that, Andre can be *his* problem.”

“Hold on,” David says abruptly.

“What?” John demands.

“We were under orders to send word to Tallmadge immediately if we found Andre,” David reminds him.

“Right you are. Why don’t you go on a head back to camp, take a horse, and bring word to Major Tallmadge yourself? His patrol is just south of our camp,” Isaac suggests. “He shouldn’t be that hard to find.”

David eyes the other two warily.

“Oh come off it, don’t look at us like that. We’ll make sure Colonel Jameson knows you played just as much a role in apprehending him,” John promises.

“More so, in fact, since you *are* the one carrying the message to the Major,” Isaac reasons.

“All right, I will rejoin you as soon as I have spoken with the Major,” David agrees.

“Godspeed,” John says. David waves to the pair and their prisoner before heading back along the path, south, back to camp. “As for you,” John trails off mid-sentence. He tightens the knot around Major Andre’s hands, and firmly grasps the prisoner by the shoulder.

“Let’s bring him in,” Isaac says.

Continental Army Outpost

Westchester, New York

Just as David is departing on horseback, Isaac and John enter from the north, flanking Major Andre on either side. The remainder of the soldiers left in the camp cheer when they see the enemy commander marched before them, and brought to Colonel John Jameson's tent.

Jameson is waiting in front, having been alerted to the situation by David prior to his departure.

"Major Andre, what brings you so far north?" Jameson jeers. "So glad we could have you here." Then, Jameson turns to address Isaac and John. "Well done by the three of you. David told me; posing as British regulars searching the area for a fugitive to find him, that was brilliant."

"Once we had heard from so many other checkpoints that no one had raised any red flags, I figured he must have been using an alias to get through. We would have never caught him while he knew we were rebels," John explains plainly. "I am not sure how much David told you before he had to depart, but we found him in possession of these *highly* incriminating documents... There are a few letters, and what appears to be a map of West Point's defenses." John hands the papers to Colonel Jameson, who inspects them more carefully.

"I am afraid you are right. I wonder how he came to possess such sensitive information," Jameson ponders. "I do not suppose our new captive is in a particularly talkative mood, then?" The colonel asks. The two shake their heads in unison.

"No sir," Isaac contributes for good measure.

“Damn. Although I suppose that would have been too easy, of course,” Jameson fumes. “Well, have him brought into my tent and tied to the main support beam. Then the pair of you can guard him until we figure out what to do with him.”

“Yes sir!” John replies obediently. He and Isaac drag Andre – who struggles pointlessly – into the tent where they tie him, standing up, to the beam. They bind both his hands and his feet for good measure. They then take lookout positions on either side of the tent, not taking their eyes off the coveted and long-elusive prisoner they had brought to their superior officer.

Tallmadge’s Patrol Route

Lower Hudson Valley, New York

Tallmadge rides along on horseback, followed by half a dozen of his own men. Now that they are actively searching for Andre, Benjamin is far less surprised when he hears a horse approaching from ahead. He pulls back on the reigns, slowing his own mount to a near standstill.

“Who’s that?” He shouts to the trail ahead. Hearing him, the approaching rider slows to a trot as he rounds the bend. It is David.

“Good afternoon, to ya, Major Tallmadge,” David calls. “My name is David Williams, of the Westchester garrison of the New York Militia. I think we may have who you are looking for in our custody, sir.”

“You have Major Andre?” Benjamin demands in disbelief.

“Yes. My fellow militiamen John Paulding and Isaac Van Wart helped me apprehend him. They should have delivered him to Colonel Jameson by now. I can take you to him,” David offers politely.

“Of course, and well done,” Benjamin says merrily. “You lot!” He calls back to the trailing Dragoons. “On David. Let’s bring in Major Andre!” The group cheers in triumph. David rears his horse and changes direction before flicking the reigns and taking off. The others follow him eagerly.

Continental Army Outpost

Westchester, New York

“Sir?” Isaac sticks his head out of the tent and calls to the colonel.

“Yes? Is there a problem in there?” Jameson demands

“No, but Major Andre said he is willing to speak to you, and only you, alone,” Isaac informs him. Intrigued, Jameson pushes aside the flaps of the tent, enters, and stares down the prisoner.

“Could you two leave me with him, please?” Jameson asks, not unkindly. The two men guarding Andre salute curtly and step outside the tent. “What is it? Feel like talking now?”

Andre lets out a forlorn sigh. He knows this is his last chance to make an escape. He says: “You must know who I am.” Colonel Jameson nods, but does not otherwise reply. “Then you also know how valuable I am to the British. Oh, I will never talk, you can be sure of that, but if you got me out of here, you would be rewarded, handsomely.” Andre struggles in the restraints a little to better look at the Colonel.

Jameson laughs. “You think you can bribe your way out of this? I bring you to New York City and then what? Your people take *me* captive and bag themselves a Continental Colonel they can squeeze for information. Then I rot on some prison ship while you’re back laughing with your loyalist cronies in Manhattan. What kind of fool do you take me for?”

Andre sighs again, deeper this time. “I suppose it was worth asking, don’t you think? Now you’ll, what, have me shipped off to West Point, I expect, where the Redcoats will *never* be able to retrieve me, is that it?” Andre says these few words with extreme care, knowing that he mustn’t seem too eager, or too horrified by the prospect of being sent to West Point. When Jameson at first does not respond, Andre decides to gloss over the moment. “Be reasonable, colonel, you rebels have not a prayer of taking on the British Empire. I am your ticket onto the winning side. Take it, do not be a prideful fool, Jameson.” He hopes with every fiber of his being that he has managed to convince the colonel he is truly

interested in bribing his way back to freedom. With any luck, after the conversation is over, the colonel would think sending Andre to West Point was his own idea.

More silence.

“I am no fool, Andre. I am above your corruption. You *are* going to West Point, and with a small army to keep you company, to be sure you aren’t going anywhere until Washington himself decides what to do with you,” Jameson says, and storms out of the tent.

Continental Army Outpost

Verplanck’s Point, New York

The camp is once again filled with soldiers, thanks to Benedict Arnold’s deceptive troop recall. Colonel Livingston is personally monitoring the Hudson River with his spyglass while a group of his men stand ready by the cannons. Night is falling, and soldiers have begun lighting torches and lanterns throughout the camp. One of his other watchmen approaches from the direction of the outpost entrance.

“Colonel, I have a soldier here to see you by the name of John Paulding, he is from the Westchester outpost,” the guard says.

“Hello,” John says, following close behind the watchman.

“What is it, soldier, we are all preoccupied at the moment,” Livingston says curtly.

“I am acting on Benedict Arnold’s orders to report back if any prisoner has been apprehended. We have Major John Andre in our custody, and again, as per the orders, will be transferring him to West Point shortly. We’re sending quite a few guards with him to make escape impossible,” John explains.

“Major Andre? Here? What could he be doing this far up the Hudson?” The colonel asks.

“We think *he* was the man who was on board the ship you attacked. When you forced The Vulture to retreat, you stranded him deep behind our lines,” John says. “Now, I know this is all very confusing, but Colonel Jameson will want me back to man *our* outpost. Could you be so kind as to send one of your messengers to inform General Andre that he can expect a prisoner who will require high security?” John asks.

“I will notify him, yes. Thank you for bringing this information to my attention,” the colonel says.”

Continental Army Outpost

Westchester, New York

“What the *hell* do you mean, sent the prisoner to West Point?” Benjamin yells, completely losing his temper. He grabs Colonel Jameson by the collar and pins him against the tent beam where Major Andre had been bound, hours earlier.

“It seemed like the appropriate thing to do,” Jameson sputters.

“Now he might get away,” Benjamin fumes. He releases Jameson, who slides down the beam and backs away from Major Tallmadge.

“Why are you concerned? West Point is the most secure location we have in our control, certainly the most well guarded in the area,” Jameson reasons.

“Besides, I sent a large group of soldiers to accompany the convoy transferring Arnold, there is almost no chance of him escaping en route. Even if he did, where would he go?” He would still be stuck far from friendly territory.”

“I’m not worried about the *trip*, colonel. I’m more concerned with what will happen when he arrives at the base,” Benjamin says.

“What are you talking about? Benedict Arnold is more than—”

“Arnold is the problem,” Benjamin says. Jameson looks confused.

Realizing he has to explain the situation now, Benjamin sighs and rubs his temple.

“What I say here is strictly between us, you understand?”

“Alright.”

“A few months ago, we discovered some incriminating correspondence between Benedict Arnold, and John Andre. Our commander in charge of West Point is actually trying to sell the base to the British, he and the Redcoats have been haggling over price for some time now,” Benjamin says quietly.

“Good Lord. Why not do anything about it if you knew?”

“We also knew that if Arnold was selling, he would want to meet Andre in person. We wanted to use this meeting as a way to lure Andre out of British held territory,” Benjamin says.

“You were using Arnold as bait to catch the British Spymaster? That’s brilliant,” Colonel Jameson says, in awe.

“Yes, but that will all be for nothing if Andre reaches West Point. Arnold will smuggle him out and the two will both be gone,” Benjamin says urgently. “Which is why we must send after him, before it is too late. Now, fetch your horse.”

Benjamin and Jameson rush outside the tent and mount their horses. The two take off, spurring their heels and crouching low.

The pair rides along the riverbank, whipping through all the rebel checkpoints Andre had worked so hard to slip through over the passed two days. Colonels and Captains call out to the pair of them, but they pass through without responding. The moon begins to rise over the Hudson, peaking out between the clouds. Tallmadge and Jameson cast long shadows across the path as they pass back through Sleepy Hollow, then Stony Point. Finally, just as the shadows of the West Point ramparts loom in the distance, they reach the prisoner convoy.

“Stop!” Benjamin calls out.

The guards halt, and turn to face him. Two men flank Andre, each holding an arm. He himself is fettered, both at his arms and feet. The manacles are chained to a heavy looking crate of provisions in a handcart borne by two other

guards. A double-file line of militiamen marches on each side of the prisoner for added protection.

“That prisoner is coming with *me*,” He commands.

Andre looks down at his feet, defeated.

September 24th

West Point Military Fortress

Hudson Valley, New York

“My goodness, the state of this place,” Washington trails off. The General had arrived not long after the apprehension of John Andre. He was already planning on visiting the base, and had scheduled breakfast with Benedict Arnold for that very morning before his security inspection.

“Yes, it appears he had been diluting the resources, delaying repairs,” Benjamin remarks.

“If I had known he was this understaffed, I would never have accepted the relief troops he sent me,” Washington shakes his head. “And where is he now?”

“Arnold had ordered all the men in his command to report to him if any prisoner was captured. He was notified by one of Livingston’s messengers. According to the men stationed here, early this morning he left in a hurry. Gone,” Benjamin explains.

The two are walking the grounds of the sparsely populated fortress. Many tents in the courtyard are empty. Bricks crumble from the walls, and from their vantage point on the ground, they can still see that most of the lookout points on the walls are unattended.

“Have we any hope of finding him?”

“Some of my men in Westchester patrolled further south. It appears he boarded The Vulture, which was still waiting for Andre, and made his escape into New York,” Benjamin says.

“Can we get him back?” Washington asks.

“I suppose we could offer a trade, give them Andre for Arnold, but I don’t see that benefiting us,” Benjamin admits. “If we recovered Arnold it would only be to hang him. Then their spymaster would go back to work in the field. It would be an awful exchange.”

“I suppose you have a point. At the very least we can resupply West Point and put that threat to rest,” Washington concedes. “Thank you for all the work your agents did to uncover this plot, Ben. If he had succeeded, it could have cost us the war. They deserve to be honored.”

Benjamin shakes his head. “Thank you, but I’m afraid no one can know the full extent of their accomplishments. It would put their security in jeopardy. The only one who knows much of anything is Colonel Jameson, and he has sworn to secrecy. As far as everyone else knows, we captured Andre by accident; a happy coincidence for us.”

“If you think that is necessary, then we shall make it so,” Washington says. “Andre will be tried on October 1st, no doubt found guilty, and executed soon after. As for West Point...”

“A number of brave officers distinguished themselves today, General. I am sure you have many capable men who can fill the commanding role,” Tallmadge says.

“You are right. I partially expected something like this to happen, you know,” Washington confesses. “Arnold, I mean. The man tried to resign more times than I can count. He married into a loyalist family. This entire situation was inevitable.”

“Yes, but you were trying to keep him from using his talents to help the British. At least you’ve delayed his plans by several months. *And* we wouldn’t have captured Andre if you had acted differently. We still would’ve lost Arnold though,” Benjamin reminds him. “This was the right decision. Now we just need to make the best of the circumstances we have been given,” Benjamin recommends.

October 14th

Townsend General Store

New York, New York

“But what about our contact, the woman?” Abraham demands.

Robert only half hears him. He is too busy shoving possessions and important documents into a small travel bag, frantically sweeping about his shop looking for what he needs. No light enters the room from outside; a thick sheet has been hung over the window, and the front door is bolted tight.

“The one from Andre’s house,” Abraham says again. Nancy stands beside him by the counter, tapping her foot anxiously.

“We don’t have time,” Nancy reminds them.

“Abraham, there is no one left,” Robert says, panic in his voice. “I went to the bar last week, the woman was gone. All my agents, all my contacts, disappeared.”

“She probably didn’t want to hang around after her boss was hanged,” Nancy comments. “And the rest of your agents had the right idea; you don’t want to be anywhere near here, not until this blows over. I know I shouldn’t need to remind you this, but even with the spymaster *dead*; there are still *some* security checkpoints between us, and freedom. Caleb can only hide with the boat for so long before someone notices.”

“I still don’t like the idea of Rowing out of New York City,” Robert shakes his head. He is trying to cram his ledger into an already stuffed bag. Finally he manages to slip it in.

“You would never make it all the way home on foot,” Abraham says.

“Home?” Robert demands. “I can’t go home, you have to let me stay with you. Abraham, Colonel Simcoe lived in my house. It’s not safe there. No matter what you have in Setauket, it’s a far better jumping off point to Connecticut.”

“He’s right, you have to hide him in your place. Or Austin can take him, but he can’t go back to Oyster Bay,” Nancy affirms.

“And I can’t stay here, it’s pretty clear what’s going on,” Robert says.

“Arnold is relentless. He knows someone in the Mayor’s inner circle had to have talked. I’m too close to the sources. He won’t rest until he catches whoever exposed him and ruined his deal.”

“Robert, we just need to get you out of New York. He has far more reason to be suspicious of Stansbury than you. We don’t have any information coming in, anyway,” Nancy says, trying to calm him. “Let’s get going, please. Are you all packed?”

“Yes.”

“Let’s go then,” Abraham says.

The three step out the alley entrance to Robert’s store, and wait patiently for him to lock up. He fumbles with the keys in his panic, delaying the process.

“Got it,” he eventually announces. “Let’s go.”

They continue on their path through the far more chaotic streets. There are still British soldiers *everywhere*, but there is no organization to their patrols, and the ones who are scanning the crowds of people look more worried than suspicious.

They make it through one checkpoint at the edge of the island of Manhattan before they deviate from the path in Queens, and head toward the coast.

“You know, you really gathered a great deal of information for us, Robert,” Abraham says. “And I am sorry that your activities hurt business, but it was for the greater good.”

Robert chuckles. “Honestly I doubt I could have pretended much longer. Those Loyalist meetings were becoming so tiresome. Holding my tongue never grew easier.”

“We’ve saved the Revolutionary cause thrice over, at least. We could stand to lay low for a little while, don’t you think?” Nancy smiles.

They come over a bank, not far from where General Scott’s agents would have made their escape from the final ill-fated reconnaissance mission of his command, to find Caleb and his crew waiting for them in his rowboat, ready to take them home.

V. Epilogue
The Spy Hunt:
The Culpers' Last Letters

The Months Following

John Andre's Execution:

Major John Andre was found guilty on October 1st, 1780, and publicly hanged the following day in Tappan, New York. Benedict Arnold was able to escape on board Andre's own ship and return to New York. While he stayed in the city, Washington tried unsuccessfully to abduct Arnold and bring him back to rebel territory to stand trial for treason. Washington did, however, offer safe passage to Peggy Arnold, back to her family in Philadelphia.

Because the plan failed, Arnold never received any more of the promised 20,000 pounds, and began working as a British officer against the rebels. Because of Robert Townsend's proximity to high-profile loyalists – which is reflected in several worried letters he penned to Abraham Woodhull – he came under suspicion several times when Arnold began his spy hunt. The Culper agents temporarily scattered while Benedict Arnold and General Clinton tried to determine who had been feeding information to the Continental Army.

Another consequence of Andre's death was the sharp decrease in both quantity, and quality of information uncovered by the Culper Ring – potentially because much of their intelligence was coming from someone close to the British Spymaster. Panicked, Robert fled to Setauket and prepared to flee to Connecticut if Arnold came looking for him. One of Robert's informants and friends, Hercules Mulligan, was captured on October 26th, not long after Townsend himself had fled the city. Eventually, Arnold was

forced to release Mulligan for lack of evidence against him. Still, this shook up Robert, who refused to continue spying until the spring of 1781.

When the heat subsided, Robert returned to New York where he gathered scraps of menial information for the remainder of the war. His final known letter was sent on September 19, 1782 and read:

The last packet has indeed brought the clearest and unequivocal proofs that the independence of America is unconditionally to be acknowledged, nor will there be any conditions insisted on for those who have joined the King's Standard. Sir Guy himself says he thinks it not improbable that the next packet may bring orders for an evacuation of N. York

A fleet is getting ready to sail for the Bay of Fundy about the first of October to transport a large number of Refugees to that Quarter. Indeed, I never saw such general distress and dissatisfaction in my life as is painted in the countenance of every Tory at N.Y.

Most of Abraham Woodhull's reports following the death of Major Andre were also lacking. They served mostly as updates on the status and morale of his agents, rather than actionable intelligence. However, by the time the Culper Ring began to wind down, French support was turning the tide of the war in favor of the rebels. By the time the last letters were sent in 1782, talk of peace had begun.

The Ring's Achievements

The Culper Spy Ring operated *effectively* for less than three years, with its most useful information coming after the addition of Robert Townsend. When looking at the organization's accomplishments, it is important to consider the scale of information the agents actually processed.

The largest victories for the Culper Spy Ring were undoubtedly the discovery of the counterfeit plots against the Continental Congress, the elaborate bluff the Culper agents orchestrated to force the British to call off an attack on Yorktown, and of course, the simultaneous capture of British Spymaster John Andre and exposure of Benedict Arnold. But equally important were hundreds of other small victories that occurred between, before, and after these major events. The Culper Ring also provided Washington with constant updates on what supplies the British were lacking, which military commanders were in New York City, where troops were headed, and what fortifications were being built. While it would be impossible to document all of these instances in narrative form, that should not diminish their importance in the war effort. This critical knowledge allowed Washington to stay informed, and wage successful campaigns elsewhere.

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Reflective Essay:

My Background with History;

When I was in third grade, our teacher took us to the Raynham Hall museum in Oyster Bay. We had been reading a book about Sally Townsend, sister of the accomplished Culper Spy Robert Townsend, and her life living with the British occupation. Raynham Hall owns, keeps, and protects the Townsend house, which looked a little out of place between ordinary shops in the crowded 21st century street. In our history lessons we focused mostly on the day-to-day life living under British rule. The Culper Spy ring was mentioned only briefly, but my interest was still piqued.

Throughout the rest of my time in school on Long Island, I had a love-hate relationship with history. I was fascinated by things like the Townsend house where you can truly immerse yourself in the past and connect with the lives of the people you learn about. But historical accounts in textbooks to me were no more than an itemized list of events that made the past seem even more distant. Exceptions came when I reached high school, and started reading actual *books* taken from the time period we were learning about, or ones that presented history in an interesting way.

For this reason, when I set out to write about the Culper Ring – a topic that had always mystified me since that field trip back in third grade – I wanted to take the feeling of standing in history, and bring it to the reader. There is certainly no shortage of thorough books on the topic. Alexander Rose’s “Washington’s Spies,” and Brian Kilmeade and Don Yaeger’s “George Washington’s Secret Six,” are two excellent

examples. Despite the descriptive and accurate nature of the books, they are still a bit hard to pick up for a casual reader. At the opposite end of the spectrum, one can find bits of pulp-history such as AMC's "Turn," TV series. The show features laughable inaccuracies such as Abraham Woodhull's romance with Nancy Strong – she was married with seven children – and has no regard for chronology. It's compelling to watch, but the historians I've spoken with say it's only about 20% accurate.

I wanted to strike a balance between informative, and approachable, so I settled on a niche genre called creative non-fiction. This form let me present the events of the Culper Ring as if I were telling a suspenseful story, but allowed me to draw on the rich history and background of the American Revolution.

When I set out to write my Capstone, I had three strong goals in mind. I wanted to study the motivation of these men and women who risked their lives to oppose the British – vastly out numbered, and undercover deep in enemy territory. I was equally interested in exploring how the spying impacted their lives after the Revolution ended. Finally I hoped I could uncover the identity of Culper Agent 355. The only information known about this operative for certain is that she was a woman. Historians believe she is responsible for feeding the spy ring information that exposed Benedict Arnold as a traitor and lead to the apprehension of the British Spymaster John Andre. I knew that learning her identity would be extremely unlikely, but was still excited by the prospect.

The Search For Accuracy:

From my early coursework at Syracuse, I knew a good amount of American History, but my overall knowledge of the Culper Ring itself was extremely limited. I started by doing some online research. *History.com* had a broad overview of the ring. *The Journal of the American Revolution*, *The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation*, and *George Washington's Mount Vernon* all had in-depth summaries of the spy ring's activities, which helped me get a broad overview of the ring. At this point, I was relieved; the organization only operated in full capacity for three years. I was focused on a specific location over the course of a short time period. I believed writing would come easy, taking a maximum of 180 pages – about 60 per year covered. Oh how wrong I was.

Even with such a small timeline, starting with the founding of the Culper Ring was not an option; in the summer of 1778, Benjamin Tallmadge and Charles Scott were at each other's throats. Each had a different vision for how the Continental Army should gather intelligence. Scott favored stealth scout missions, while Tallmadge liked the idea of a spy network. I thought that the story of Nathan Hale would be a good place to start, since Hale is such a well-known figure in the American Revolution. Hale was killed in a risky mission deep behind enemy lines. His was the first in a series of deaths that convinced Washington to radically change the way the Continental Army looked at military intelligence.

Even with my decision to add Hale to the mix, I realized that in no uncertain terms could I include *all* of the Culper Ring's many operatives. The book "Washington's Secret Six," which I had used in my research, had already become something of a cruel joke to me. I counted to six quite quickly with Benjamin Tallmadge, Abraham Woodhull,

Caleb Brewster, Austin Roe, Nancy Strong, and Robert Townsend. But there were more. Each agent had a stand-in to do his job when he was under suspicion. There were additional couriers, slaves of the agents, family who colluded with the ring: friends of friends who all pooled information together. I could hardly keep track of them all, and I worried the reader might face the same problem. At the same time, I didn't want my eventual audience to feel as though there were holes in the story. The best way forward seemed to be mapping out the path information took from New York City to Washington's desk, and including all the operatives who played the biggest role in that process. Agent 355, the unmasked participant, gathered intelligence directly from the British spymaster John Andre. That information was added to what Robert Townsend Already knew, and sent back to Setauket in the care of tavern-keeper Austin Roe. Roe brought the information back to Abraham Woodhull, who – with the help of Nancy Strong – passed coded letters to Caleb Brewster. Brewster rowed the letters across the Long Island Sound to Benjamin Tallmadge, the American Spymaster.

I started writing the scene of Hale's capture, but found myself questioning the details I had found. I had no real description of the man, and conflicting accounts of his capture to work with. I decided stop writing and learn more about the individual characters. For Nathan Hale, I sent a request to the Library of Congress. They were able to send me a copy of a first-hand account of Hale's adventure into New York City, as well as a physical description from a bystander. Benjamin Tallmadge was a bit easier; he had written a brief memoir, which was easy to find. This was enough information to begin. I completely reworked the first chapter.

I wrote freely, moving through events I had already done a considerable amount of research on. Work slowed to a crawl when I turned my attention to the events that took place in Setauket. The fact that I didn't know how long it took the agents to get from place to place bothered me. The fact that I couldn't accurately describe where they lived in relation to one another, or where they met, bothered me more. I tried unsuccessfully to write based off of modern maps, but I knew everything would have changed too much. I started looking for 18th century maps of Setauket, which led me to the Three Village Historical Society.

The group has a small museum dedicated to preserving the story of the Culper Ring, and offers walking tours of the town. The tours covered everything from the village green where townsfolk gathered, to conscience bay where Woodhull and Brewster met to pass along their treasonous correspondence. I signed up, and made my first trip to the village where the ring was born. It was then when I met one of their historians, Margo Arceri. She took us to where the historic landmarks used to be. I saw the former sites of the Woodhull home, the Roe tavern, and Anna Strong's house. The tour group also went to Conscience bay, one of the meeting spots for the Culper Agents. After the tour, Arceri told me about one of the cornerstone accomplishments of the spy ring that I hadn't heard about: the bluff that stopped Britain's attack on Rhode Island and saved the Franco-American alliance. I now had all the information I needed to accurately describe the village during the revolution. I also had a good adventure I could write into the final chapter of the book to make it a more compelling read.

After exploring Setauket and learning more about the particulars of the ring's operations – such as their use of dead drops to pass along letters in the town – I got back

to writing at full-speed. By the time I reached the 130-page mark, a few things became abundantly clear to me. First, there was no way I could possibly wrap up this book in 50 pages. I had only reached 1779; I still had another year's worth of activity to cover. Second, I discovered one of the main goals of my thesis that I had set for myself: the motivation of the agents. As Abraham expanded the ring to include Robert Townsend, I realized that most of the members were not committed to a patriotic cause, but rather different loosely united personal vendettas directed toward the same enemy: the British Empire.

For example, Robert Townsend was a merchant whose family owned and operated a fleet of eight ships. He did lucrative business with the British in New York City for the duration of the war. The unreliable Cork Fleet, which resupplied the British forces, made his work as a merchant that much easier. If anything, the revolution actually benefited him. He remained neutral for the better part of the war until a visit home to Oyster Bay so enraged him that he jumped at Woodhull's offer to secretly undermine the British. Colonel Simcoe was stationed in Oyster Bay for most of his time as leader of the Queen's Rangers. He tore up the Townsend's property and destroyed their orchard to make fortifications at the center of town. But what bothered Townsend the most was Simcoe's infatuation with his young sister, Sally. Simcoe gave Sally what is considered by many to be the first Valentine's Day card. Two other officers etched compliments in a pane of glass and presented it to two of Robert's other sisters. The infatuation was serious enough that Samuel Townsend, their father, arranged the house to put the soldiers as far away from his daughters as possible, keeping his family in sight at all times. I was able to truly see this on display when I visited Raynham Hall Museum again as an adult, and

spoke with their guides as I walked around the Townsend house – one of the only Culper related buildings that have been preserved.

My takeaway was that almost every agent had a personal reason to oppose the British, rather than a sense of patriotic duty. Abraham Woodhull joined the cause in exchange for being released from a Continental Army prison in Connecticut. He was being held for smuggling goods to British soldiers in New York City. Nancy strong joined out of anger over her husband's imprisonment, and British occupation of her family estate. She was forced to live in a small cottage with her seven children for the duration of the war, despite the rest of her family's loyalist ties. The Underhills agreed to help after the British burned their mill to the ground, forcing them to open a barely-profitable boarding house. The only members of the ring who seem to have a sense of Patriotic duty were Caleb Brewster and Benjamin Tallmadge, who openly enlisted and left Setauket to fight with the Continental Army. Admittedly it probably helped them perform better undercover compared to their predecessor Nathan Hale, who was so vehemently anti-British that he boasted about his role as a spy to his captors.

Yet it is still an odd feeling to learn that these *heroes* of the revolution were just as imperfect as any other person, and motivated by the same factors. I thought it made them more real and relatable than the more glorified and venerated figures of the revolution, and I wanted to convey that feeling to the reader. I rethought how I wanted to start the book. My original first depiction of a Culper agent was of Caleb Brewster spying on the British fleet from across a dark harbor. It was exciting and attention grabbing, but in light of what I learned, it didn't feel right. That opening set the stage for a heroic story, and I did not want the reader to get that impression. Instead I started with the much less

glamorous story of Abraham Woodhull sitting in a Connecticut jail, waiting to be granted his freedom. I try to convey his desperation and hesitation in participating in the Culper Ring when he first meets with Benjamin Tallmadge. For the rest of the book, I tried to delve into the personal motives of the different figures, rather than talking about the general cause of the revolution. In the end, the concept of patriotism is mostly absent from my book.

The Culper Letters:

After reading secondary sources and memoirs, and touring the important historical sites, I had a good enough understanding to write about the events of 1779. As I turned my attention to 1780, the final year I planned to cover in my research, the sources at hand became much less helpful. To get information that satisfied my need for an accurate account, I had to turn to the original Culper letters. As a source, they were initially quite difficult to use: the handwriting was difficult to read, and most of the letters were at least partially in code – with the exception of those from Robert Townsend, who relied solely on invisible ink to protect his correspondence. My first attempt reading a Culper letter took an entire afternoon, and there were still plenty of words I could not make out. After some practice, I was able to read the letters – which were made available through the *Colonial Williamsburg Foundation* – at a normal pace, and decipher the code with a transcribed copy of the Culper code from *George Washington's Mount Vernon*.

The letters provided insight that I couldn't capture from books or articles. I learned the habits and character of the agents from the way they wrote, and how careful they were with their letters. Abraham Woodhull for example was so paranoid he coded the bulk of his letters, almost needlessly so. He went so far as to replace words like "land," and "letter," with numbers. He even indicated that he wanted Benjamin Tallmadge to destroy all of his correspondence upon receiving it. These tiny details eventually became an important part of how I developed Woodhull as a character.

In addition to these character traits, the letters helped me fill in some of the information I could not verify from my sources, such as specific dates, troop movements, and morale. A handful of letters stuck out to me as incredibly important, and I made the decision to include them in my book, copied word for word. By the end of the summer of 1779, Robert Townsend had begun spying, but remained largely unsuccessful. The information he was learning was no different than what the Underhills, or Austin Roe could have learned. Washington was displeased with the lack of information coming in, and wanted Robert to quit his job as a merchant and become a full time spy. In one of his letters, Tallmadge begged Washington to give Townsend more time to find information. This letter led was helpful, but contributed to the first major breach in the way I had wanted to write my book.

Taking Liberties:

One month, Robert Townsend was receiving very little in the way of useful information. The next, he was taking meetings with associates of the New York City Mayor. This posed quite a problem for me, as I had no idea how Townsend came to associate with such prominent loyalist connections. Although I had a theory, I had no way to prove it based on the existing information I had gathered. The gap in my research caused a great conflict: I would have to skip an entire month in the story's timeline for the sake of maintaining a complete commitment to historical accuracy, or sacrifice some certain accuracy to make the story easier to follow.

I had a conversation with my mentor from the History department, and we agreed that the primary purpose of my book was to make the story of the Culper Ring interesting and accessible. Being too focused on pure accuracy would make it feel more like an ordinary textbook, which was too far from my original goal. My theory – which truthfully is quite plausible – is that Robert Townsend had an opportunity to begin engaging in trade with high-ranking British officials. I know for certain that at the time, the British were in the process of importing a special linen paper that could be used to print money. This was part of the long-term plot to destabilize the already hyper-inflated Continental Congress's currency. But you could not print currency with regular ink. Printing presses required a special type of dry ink, which not all merchants had access to in large quantities. The Townsend family however, had access to a fleet of eight ships, which they could send anywhere in the world to bring them specialty items. This made Robert the ideal supplier for any materials the British army couldn't get from the Cork Fleet. Plus, Robert had remained notably neutral in the conflict thus far. He sold to everyone without prejudice, and business was good.

I speculated that around this time, Robert Townsend offered, or was approached with an offer, to sell a ranking British official a specialty item. Based on the timing, and the motivations of the British forces at the time, it seemed plausible that this would have had something to do with the counterfeit plot. The Glencairn cargo ship was already on its way to the colonies with a crate filled with counterfeit paper, so I decided that if Townsend was going to be selling anything it was probably the ink. This was an interesting moment for me as a writer, because up until this point in the book, I could prove that most of the events I described had happened. Of course, there were conversations and rendezvous that couldn't be verified exactly but based on the letters, memoirs, and accounts, they likely *did* happen. This interaction was my first *educated guess* about the Culper Ring. Despite the lack of backup, I do believe my account is close to the truth.

Not long after I took small liberties in explaining how Robert Townsend became so connected, I was faced with a similar dilemma, and confronted with the realization that one of my project goals could not be accomplished: it was impossible to determine who agent 355 was with accuracy. My connections at the Three Village Historic society are convinced the agent is Nancy Strong, who helped develop the clothesline-code to signal Abraham Woodhull whenever Caleb Brewster was making port. Another theory is that the agent was a woman in the inner circle of Major Andre, possibly a socialite or a maid. If she cleaned his house, she could easily use dusting off a desk or bookshelf as an excuse if she was caught sifting through his mail. The third and perhaps least exciting theory is that there was no agent 355.

The basis for this is that Abraham Woodhull had been known to exaggerate to win himself favor with General Washington. At the beginning of his correspondence, he claimed he had two reliable sources in New York City that could feed him information on British Activity. Washington was less pleased when he learned that Woodhull's sources were his sister and brother in law, and that the extent of their usefulness was providing Woodhull with a place to sleep while he was spying. Woodhull did something similar concerning agent 355. He wrote a vague and cryptic letter, saying: "*I intend to visit New York City before long, and think by the assistance of a lady of my acquaintance, shall be able to outwit them all.*" The reason for the confusion is that he never actually names this associate. It is possible that he was simply trying to impress Washington, and there really was no such connection. But since on Woodhull's trip that immediately followed this letter, he brought Nancy Strong with him, some believe she is agent 355. She routinely went into the city with Woodhull as a cover – married couples were subjected to less scrutiny at checkpoints, and the Strong family in Manhattan had serious loyalist connections that Woodhull could have been exploiting.

The reason I subscribe to the theory that 355 was a maid or associate of Andre's, is because the quality of information the Culper ring gathered perfectly coincides with his time in New York City. Information flowed freely soon after his arrival, but as soon as he was captured and killed, the quality of the Culper reports plummeted. Abraham Woodhull spent the rest of the war writing to Tallmadge about the morale of his operatives, rather than locations of troops. Again, I still had to make an educated guess here. This choice actually stopped my writing for quite some time. I wanted to continue, but I wanted to pick the most plausible theory that fit with the rest of the Culper Ring's history. This

wound up being a much tougher call for me than my decision surrounding Robert Townsend. The problem I had with accepting my favorite theory – the one in which agent 355 was a maid for Major Andre – is that up until this point, the Culper Ring was made exclusively from childhood acquaintances of Abraham Woodhull. Nancy fits that part of the profile, but her involvement doesn't make sense when held up against the intelligence-gathering timeline. Meanwhile, the theory of Andre's maid makes the most sense based on the intelligence she gathered, but not Woodhull's recruitment preferences.

I ultimately decided to choose to make agent 355 a stranger. It made the most sense to me, because even if Abraham wasn't comfortable with recruiting someone he didn't know personally, I do not believe it would have been possible for Nancy Strong to acquire the information that agent 355 gathered.

Perspective and Review:

When I reached the end of my book and looked back on the story I told, I felt as though presenting three large accomplishments greatly diminished the activities of the Culper Ring over the first two years of its existence. I did not want the reader to leave with the impression that the agents did nothing for two years, followed by a few acts of grandeur which helped turn the tides of battle. I decided to use a kind of afterword to explain the scope of all of their accomplishments. My biggest obstacle is that it would take far too long to explain the impact of every single letter sent during the Culper Ring's

operation. It would be tedious to read about every single captain or ship that was reported to Washington by these agents. But nonetheless, this information is largely what allowed the Continental Army to move and win battles. Knowing what British officers were in New York meant knowing which units *weren't* available for battle.

When I look back on my research I can say that I did meet most of my goals. I explored the motives for each of the agents in joining the Culper Ring, as well as how their lives were affected by helping the Continental Army, while I stopped short of identifying Agent 355, I did pick a plausible theory about her identity. As a whole, I believe that my capstone successfully presents a complicated historical organization in a way that is interesting and attainable to a casual reader.