

The Forge
by
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FADE IN:

EXT. BERMUDA WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Pitch-black building. A roof panel is removed, the moon shines through. Two spies peer in; one looks down the road. One is CLARK, quite young; HONEYMAN and WAINWRIGHT are about 30.

WAINWRIGHT

It's not a patrol. Two soldiers.

HONEYMAN

Only takes one to see us. Let me know when they're gone.

Tense silence.

WAINWRIGHT

Alright, we're on.

HONEYMAN

Get in there and open the gate.

CLARK

I can't see a thing down there, give me your torch.

HONEYMAN

The whole building is filled with gunpowder, and he wants a torch.

CLARK

It's dark!

HONEYMAN

Use the moonlight, the gate is at the north end.

CLARK

How do I get it open in the dark?

HONEYMAN

Figure it out, for God's sake.

They lower him in by a rope.

CLARK

Goddamn!

HONEYMAN

Louder, they can't hear you in London.

CLARK
Give me a hammer!

HONEYMAN
Too loud, you fool. Try a pry bar.

They drop one in.

CLARK
Goddamn!

He pops open a slat with a loud crack.

HONEYMAN
Shit. Is the patrol coming back?

Silence.

WAINWRIGHT
Clock's ticking, boy!

CLARK
I've got it!

In front of the warehouse, a team sneaks in and begins emerging with barrels of gunpowder.

HONEYMAN
Not a bloody sound!

The team rolls gunpowder out to a small boat; a larger vessel in the distance. As the boat crosses the water, shouts and then shots are heard.

HONEYMAN (CONT'D)
Heads down, boys. Their cannon are down the road, they can't sink us. Yet.

EXT, SHIP DECK - NIGHT

Heavy seas off Bermuda. Ben FRANKLIN, Honeyman, Clark and the ship's MASTER on the bridge.

MASTER
There's a patrol coming. I see two ships. We've got to head north.

FRANKLIN
You're the master, but I'm paying the bill. We go west.

MASTER

They're going to catch us!

FRANKLIN

This is Bermuda? There's a current over there, take us right to Philadelphia. Got the King's supply of gunpowder in the Americas, give it straight to George Washington.

(laughs)

MASTER

The seas are too heavy over there.

FRANKLIN

And that's how we lose the Brits.

MASTER

If we don't sink.

FRANKLIN

You're a coastal sailor. This is the ocean. Biggest waves you'll ever see. I'm the biggest bloody pirate in the Atlantic, got Irish ships, French ships.

MASTER

Aren't you a bit old to be a pirate?

FRANKLIN

Watch your mouth, lad. Last time we grabbed a British ship, the captain was arrested - we took him so easy the Brits thought I bribed him! He's in the same jail they had me in.

MASTER

There's more of them now!

FRANKLIN

Are they catching up to us?

MASTER

No.

FRANKLIN

Are they firing their cannon?

MASTER

No.

FRANKLIN

Then get back to the wheel, make sure we don't sink, can you do that? ...I'm bringing this lad into the network.

HONEYMAN

You can't sir, we don't know him -

FRANKLIN

(to Clark)

I run a spy network. Got agents in London, propaganda, intelligence. I had to let Congress in on it -- how long you think Congress can keep a secret? The King is probably reading my messages before I do.

CLARK

So you're a pirate and a spy.

FRANKLIN

You showed real promise at that warehouse. Even if you are clumsy. Want to do more work like this?

CLARK

Rather be on dry land. I'm no sailor.

FRANKLIN

Perfect. Need a smart boy to keep an eye on British camps, supplies, cannon. The bad part, you eat the same shit food as our soldiers, and there's a chance the Brits will hang you. Think about it. I'm going to practice my guitar.

CLARK

Yes, captain - are you the captain?

FRANKLIN

No, son. Just a book printer. Name's Franklin. Go get dry now. Who's this?

CLARK

Wainwright. Clumsy as a club-footed cow.

FRANKLIN

Alright, you had your go as a spy.
Back to the army with you. You're
not cut out for this work.

INT. PENNSYLVANIA FARMHOUSE - DAY

MARY TOMKINS, a young midwife, assisting at a difficult
birth; frightened MOTHER and FATHER.

MOTHER

Oh, God, when is she coming?

MARY

It's the fastest horse in the
valley. Be any minute now.

FATHER

Why can't you do it?

MARY

I'm the second-best midwife in the
state. You want the second best?

FATHER

Who's the best?

LIZZIE, an African woman, bursts into the cabin.

LIZZIE

Mary, what on earth is going on?
Why are you throwing business my
way?

MARY

The money is all yours on this one.

LIZZIE

Baby coming out wrong? Cord all
tangled?

MARY

It's the mother. Baby is huge,
won't deliver. Tore the womb, tore
the sack. Pulse is racing.

LIZZIE

Got your nails trimmed? Got a stool
ready?

FATHER

What in God's name are you?

LIZZIE
You're the father?

FATHER
Yes, I want to -

LIZZIE
Get some whisky and a good hard
stone. And a tree branch, about
like that.

She shows him her pinky. He leaves. The African pulls out a
knife.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)
We get her drunk, we sharpen the
knife on the stone, cut across like
this.

MARY
Not up and down?

LIZZIE
Cut across, slow the bleeding. We
cut the skin, then cut everything
else down here. We get out the same
way, stitch the womb, then outside.
Then we pray we can fight back the
infection.

MARY
God, the mother, how can she
possibly -

The African gives her a sharp look.

MOTHER
Don't be silly, Mary. I'm doomed.

LIZZIE
Not so fast. We've done this
before.

MOTHER
Be honest. How often do the mothers
live through this?

LIZZIE
Cutting you open? With Mary, she
can save one mother in six. With
me, one mother in two. We've been
doing this in Africa for ages.

MOTHER

Africa?

LIZZIE

I think you live, the baby lives.
Which would be a good thing,
because this will be your last.

MOTHER

My only one?

LIZZIE

You want to tell the father?

MOTHER

I'll tell him. That's if I'm ...

LIZZIE

If you're alive? Leave it to me.

The husband returns. The African begins sharpening the knife on the stone.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)

Whisky. Get her dead drunk. Then we use it to clean her belly, the knife, the needles and thread. You bite down on the branch and we go in. Got clean cloth?

MOTHER

In the crate by the stove.

LIZZIE

You, mister, if the next farm has whisky, get some.

MARY

Next place over isn't a farm, it's the valley forge. He sells needles, get a few!

EXT. OUTSIDE FARMHOUSE - DAY

Mary is with her horse. Lizzie and the father approach.

MARY

(to the horse)

If you hadn't been so quick, this would all be over. You saved that girl's life. Got you a nice apple.

LIZZIE
(from the doorway)
You remember everything I told you?

FATHER
I think so.

LIZZIE
Get those girls over on the next
farm to help for a few weeks.

MARY
Lizzie, do you know what you're
doing next?

LIZZIE
Got money in my pocket. I'm going
to find the Continentals, the army.
My man was trying to join up.

MARY
I was thinking the same thing. My
husband is a Tory soldier, prisoner
now, the Continentals need nurses.

LIZZIE
You're English!

MARY
Not anymore. Continentals are dying
by the dozen - flux, the pox, no
food, it's one big patch of mud. My
husband is furious, the whole idea.
But I like that General Washington.

LIZZIE
Don't be singing songs to me about
Washington. He owns 300 slaves,
hunts down the ones that escape.

MARY
Down Virginia way, didn't they
promise your men they would be
freed if they fought with the army?

LIZZIE
They lied. After Boston they put
them right back in the fields.

MARY
Well, now's your chance to make the
general see the light.

LIZZIE

Just nursing? You're not a camp follower?

MARY

God no. They have women in camp. Wives, women who do laundry for bread, the children. And of course the other kind of women.

LIZZIE

Alright, I'll go. Colored midwife, even up here, hard to find work. These days mostly I help pregnant girls in trouble, you know?

MARY

You mean -

LIZZIE

Yes. Knife work. The nasty stuff.

MARY

The Tories will kill you if they catch you at it.

LIZZIE

Catch ME? You know the Tories are looking for you?

MARY

Me?

LIZZIE

Try to find out where you go on these rides. They say you're a spy for Washington. In spite of your husband.

EXT. SIDE STREET IN SMALL TOWN - NIGHT

Mary leaves a livery stable and heads for a pub when SUE PRUDEN, a young woman, grabs her and pulls her into an alley.

SUE

Mary, thank God.

Mary touches Sue's face.

MARY

Sue, sweet, what's wrong?

SUE
Come on back here!

MARY
What -

SUE
Quickly!

MARY
I hear horses.

Glimpse of British cavalry trotting down a street nearby.

SUE
Borrow your horse?

MARY
My horse?

SUE
Please, I'm in serious trouble -

MARY
What kind of -

SUE
I need to go now!

MARY
He's at the livery, you know -

SUE
Course I know which one. Fast as
blazes, just what I need.

Sue runs to the stable, mounts, gallops into the trees
nearby. A tense minute. The British ride up.

BRITISH SOLDIER
Hello, Missus Tomkins, isn't it?
Looking for a woman about that
high, did she come through here?

MARY
Haven't seen her.

INT. TAVERN - DAY

Mary enters and sees Sue, giving her a big hug.

MARY

Missed you something terrible. It's been days since you were in town!

SUE

Had a bit of business to do.

MARY

Sue. Is the Army after you for something? The King's Army?

SUE

I need you to not ask questions.

MARY

Sue, you're frightening me.

SUE

I don't want to get you in the stew too. Your horse is in the stable.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

A depot is on fire. British soldiers panic.

BRITISH OFFICER

Get the bucket brigade going?

BRITISH SOLDIER

We took the town from the rebels, they shut down the fire brigade.

BRITISH OFFICER

Our supplies for the whole summer. They already stole our gunpowder.

BRITISH SOLDIER

Good news, report from our agent. Boarding house across town.

BRITISH OFFICER

Get me a platoon, meet me in the square.

INT. BOARDINGHOUSE ROOM - NIGHT

JOHN SAMSON, a young American spy, is burning notes in a fireplace. Brits enter and survey the scene.

BRITISH OFFICER
 Had yourself an exciting evening?
 ...How careless, your papers have
 caught fire. Here, let me help.

He plucks out a burning page.

BRITISH OFFICER (CONT'D)
 What language is this, I wonder?
 Letters and numbers all together?
 ...Take off his boots and check the
 heel.

BRITISH SOLDIER
 This one's hollow, sir.

BRITISH OFFICER
 I brought my men to beat you until
 you confessed. With the cipher
 notes and the hollow boot, I hardly
 need a confession now. Sorry lads
 ...You have spies running from
 Philadelphia to New York. But it
 doesn't work if you jump into the
 middle of the chain. You broke the
 rules. Now I can march right up
 your chain to New York. After we
 hang you, we'll find them and hang
 them too.

JOHN SAMSON
 I don't know what you're talking -

BRITISH OFFICER
 Please, spare me. Your partner made
 a mistake. The shipment of muskets,
 only two men knew about it. All we
 had to do was follow them.

JOHN SAMSON
 Partner?

A soldier pushes Sue Pruden into the room.

JOHN SAMSON (CONT'D)
 Sue --

BRITISH OFFICER
 How extraordinary. She said she had
 no idea who you were.

EXT. OUTSIDE BOARDINGHOUSE - NIGHT

Honeyman and Clark wait helplessly outside the boardinghouse.

CLARK

We only need a few lads -

HONEYMAN

We can't get her out. Or him.

CLARK

Dammit, Honeyman -

HONEYMAN

You want to hang with them? They were sloppy and they didn't listen.

CLARK

We've been betrayed. Someone in one of the chain is working for the Tories. Someone at the warehouse.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

A cart set up under a tree for a double hanging, John Samson and Sue Pruden. British soldiers nervously watch an angry crowd. Mary, terrified, watches from the crowd.

OFFICER

By order of the governor, John Samson and Susan Pruden are to be hanged by the neck until they are dead, charge of treason, the specification, providing maps to enemies of the Crown. Have you anything to say?

SUE

I reject the authority of this king. You lot out there. If having a king did us any good, it still slavery, isn't it? But it doesn't. How often has England given us a child for a king, a murderer, an old man who can no longer reason? Nobles and uncles burning towns as they fight for power? Having a king is so dangerous that the British already had to kill one king. There are no kings in Holland and they have peace and they prosper.

JOHN

Every law this king writes is to keep us low and humble. How can we accept that we will be slaves, and our grandchildren after us? What parents would we be then?

Disruption in the crowd, two men arrested by the Tories.

SUE

Where did these kings come from? Centuries ago a band of pirates, bandits, took England at sword point, led by a bastard. Their rule began with years of robbery and rape, just like their bastard soldiers today. Every English king has bastard blood.

OFFICER

This is treason, top to bottom! Let's get on with it!

SUE

What are you going to do, hang me twice? You said I could speak.

Another disruption; a man is beaten by soldiers.

JOHN

This king, George, he's a maniac, he yells at trees, he won't eat, they locked him in a cell while his idiot ministers hire mercenaries and savages to kill us.

SUE

Even if -

She spots Clark and Honeyman in the crowd and they look at each other for a moment, until a soldier looks over to see what she's looking at.

SUE (CONT'D)

Even if we were not his slaves - being an Englishman means we have enemies across Europe. One war after another with France and Spain.

HANGMAN

Don't mean to interrupt, did you say you don't want the hood?

SUE

I'm not bloody finished yet!

HANGMAN

I have to do things in the right order. You don't have the hood on, rope is going to hurt your neck.

SUE

Hurt my neck? It's going to break my neck, you great pillock! Some hangman, worried about my neck, how did you get this job? You belt up until I'm done.

The crowd laughs.

SUE (CONT'D)

Can we allow this continent to be ruled by a tiny island miles away? As well have the moon rule the earth. If Britain is the mother, why is the mother devouring her young? This king can't reason with us, compromise with us, we can't trust him, we can't forgive the men who burn our towns. If we waste this chance, ages to come will not forgive us. The sun never shed its light on a cause of greater worth. This is the cause of all mankind --
(sees Mary in the crowd)
...Mary? You promised. You said you wouldn't watch. I want to be brave, I can't do this with you here.

Mary, streaming tears, runs around a corner.

SUE (CONT'D)

Alright, I'm done with you bastards. Let's get it over.

Mary, in an alley, hears a cart rolling, a riot beginning, some firing. She runs away and finds her husband TOMKINS.

MARY

I don't want to hear it. She was my friend. She persuaded me. Treason or no. You're going off on a mission, well go! I have no interest in what you're doing for the king. Got a baby to deliver.
(to her horse)
How's my boy? Got sugar for you.

She heads out of town, Clark stumbles into her path. They look at each other for a moment, make their excuses, and flee in different directions.

EXT. CAMP - DAY

Clark argues with Wainwright; Mary waits a few paces away. A shot rings out.

WAINWRIGHT

A sniper, in daylight?

CLARK

Mary's British! She came here when we captured her husband. Shot in the gut.

WAINWRIGHT

She's our new nurse. You can trust her.

CLARK

Not with everything.

WAINWRIGHT

Of course not everything...Miss. When you were getting the bullet out of me, I heard you arguing with your husband.

MARY

You were listening?

WAINWRIGHT

Didn't tell a soul, honest. But I'm telling him.

(to Clark)

She's no friend of the king. She's ...she's the kind of person we want. She takes good care of us, she's clever, she rides that mad horse of hers...

MARY

(smiling)

You're that interested, I got a sister just like me back home...I can speak for myself.

CLARK

Alright. We were wondering how well you knew that warehouse.

MARY

Every smuggler in the valley goes there, selling, drinking, fighting. I'm a midwife, get supplies there.

CLARK

You were Sue Pruden's friend,? I saw you in the square when she...

MARY

Yes. I didn't stay for the ending.

CLARK

We were wondering about her friends at the warehouse. Could be one of them wasn't really her friend.

MARY

And that's how she ended up -

CLARK

Yes.

MARY

So you two are - never mind -

CLARK

We couldn't possibly tell you about that, you're a Brit.

MARY

Sue was my friend.

CLARK

I know.

MARY

You see the position you're putting me in? My man's in the King army!

CLARK

How's he doing?

MARY

Infection, it's bad.

CLARK

How often do the British patrols go to the warehouse, look people over?

MARY

Never. I'll be damned.

CLARK

Brits never watch the place. So
who's there every time you go?

MARY

The barman and his daughter, the
one who peddles the drinks.

CLARK

Who else?

MARY

French smuggler, Thibodeau.

CLARK

He's not working for the Tories,
French hate the English. Who else?

MARY

Smith, good friend of mine,
smuggler. Rich boy, smuggles tea
and molasses. Got balls, too -
tells anyone who will listen how
much he hates the King. Keeps to
himself otherwise. Lots of trips
out to the dock for "business".

CLARK

What's his name again?

MARY

Smith.

WAINRIGHT

Thanks, Mary.

MARY

Is he really the one who done for
Sue?

WAINWRIGHT

Think so.

She is enraged; later we'll learn why.

MARY

Well...go kill him then. I mean it.
All of you blokes, look at me! You
find him and kill him!

The look on her face is positively alarming. Clark goes to
Honeyman who has been listening.

CLARK

So he brags out loud he hates the king, and disappears to do business in the shadows. The smuggler.

HONEYMAN

I've heard some rough stuff about the barman, too.

CLARK

The Brits don't bother checking the warehouse because they have their own man there already. Shite!

EXT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

The warehouse is a depot where smugglers and traders buy and sell; a bar at one end is busy. Lizzie and Mary enter. Mary greets Smith.

MARY

Oi, love.

LIZZIE

I've still got more of that vaccine, if you can get me cash.

MARY

Not now. Can you stay a bit, just watch things for me?

LIZZIE

Watch what?

MARY

I'm not sure.

BARMAN

Hey, isn't your man a Tory soldier?

MARY

Yes, he is.

A silence descends.

BARMAN

Well, we get all kinds.

Honeyman and Clark enter, separate doors. They ignore each other. Mary perched in the middle. Clark watches the barman, Honeyman watches SMITH, charming smuggler with a chicken leg.

DRUNK

You're a lady, or a lady's lady.
What are you doing here, love?

MARY

In town for some tea. Been nursing
my man up in Washington's camp.

DRUNK

I'll slide over, probably got more
diseases than Annie over there.

MARY

Rebel camp's almost empty anyway.

Smith looks at her and moves closer.

DRUNK

Get off it.

MARY

Any man who can stand, marched off.
Head for the city. In a big hurry.

SMITH

An attack?

MARY

I'm just a nurse.

Clark watches the barman, who ignores the talk and argues
with Annie over money. Honeyman sees Smith move to the bar
girl; Smith looks at Mary, not the bar girl. He has abandoned
his chicken leg.

SMITH

Tuppence and we're square, right?

He heads for the door, then turns to see Clark, Honeyman and
Mary all standing and staring at him. The customers turn to
see what they're looking at. Mary decides to flush him out.

MARY

Run back to the King and get your
money, you bastard.

His face gives it away. He runs, they all pursue.

MARY (CONT'D)

Got ya!

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Clark and Honeyman run to different ends of the main street; bar customers wander outside to watch. They meet again in front of the bar.

CLARK
Must have a bolt hole ready.

HONEYMAN
Clever lad. Shite!

CLARK
Least we put the bastard out of business.

HONEYMAN
I want his hide over the fireplace.
Shite! Meet you in town.

He takes off. Mary comes round a corner.

MARY
You find him and put paid to him.
Promise me! We were that close!

CLARK
We? Whose side are you on?

MARY
You just find him.

LIZZIE
Got trouble with that tea boy?...
He's got a shack two blocks from
the docks. Each time he sails in,
first night with his wife, second
night at the shack with his
mistress.

CLARK
And the mistress, who might she
be?...Buy you a rum, let's talk.

LIZZIE
You boys are trouble.

CLARK
We need to warn Washington quick.
Mary, you think -

He turns, and sees Mary galloping away like mad.

MARY

Come on, sweet! Show me what you can do!

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

Clark and Honeyman watch the square from behind a hut. Clark kitted up as peddler, sack on his back.

HONEYMAN

So no sign of that bastard Smith?

CLARK

Not a thing..We shouldn't be here.

HONEYMAN

We have no choice.

CLARK

I think they know my face, and if they see us together...

HONEYMAN

With that shitty map, I'm amazed we found this place at all.

CLARK

We need more agents, or we're sunk.

HONEYMAN

We need to find out what's in that shipment. If it's food, Tories are settling in for the winter. If it's ammunition, they're attacking soon.

CLARK

Let me go first. If they do know me, we'll see pretty quick, and you can make a run for it. Stay back!

He enters the town square with his pack. Watches for a minute. He gets partway across when he hears soldiers -

TORY

Hey. There he is again.

CLARK

Housewares, cheap as they come -

TORY

Hey, tinker!

CLARK
Oh bollocks -

He runs. They chase him and shoot him in the rear. He escapes into the trees behind the town. Soldiers pursue and then give up the chase.

TORY
That peddler's working for
Washington.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Continuation. Honeyman finds Clark.

HONEYMAN
Clark!

CLARK
Shot me in the ass.

HONEYMAN
I know, I saw.

CLARK
Get me back to camp. We'll have to
take the woods above the road.

HONEYMAN
Alright.

CLARK
Can you get the ball out?

HONEYMAN
Let's leave it for Mary in camp.

CLARK
She's a Tory.

HONEYMAN
Her husband's a Tory. Mary's
alright.

INT. WOMEN'S TENT - NIGHT

Wainwright looks for Mary.

WAINRIGHT
Miss?

MARY

Um, what...

WAINRIGHT

Sorry. Got a boy needs a doctor...

MARY

Now?

WAINRIGHT

Now.

INT. SICK TENT - NIGHT

Mary tending to Clark's bullet wound.

MARY

You can stop drinking, I got the ball.

CLARK

Nice work, miss. Damn well hurts!

MARY

I know. Alright, come on in.

Hamilton enters.

MARY (CONT'D)

I take it you want me to -

HAMILTON

A moment's privacy, yes, thanks.

MARY

Hey boy. Any word of Smith?

Clark shakes his head. She leaves.

HAMILTON

Back on the road soon?

CLARK

Mary's a marvel. She knows I'm a spy. She figured it out.

HAMILTON

Damn! Let's warn Washington - she might tell the Tories.

CLARK

No she won't... Let's find a new recruit. Something different.

A shot rings out and thumps the tent.

HAMILTON
Damn! Anybody hit?

EXT. MAIN STREET OF TOWN ON DELAWARE RIVER - DAY

Burning house in a fishing town. British platoon, led by MAJOR ANDRE, surrounded by VILLAGERS.

ANDRE
The Willett family. Second time today, you will get no relief here.

VILLAGER
Your soldiers burned down my house!

ANDRE
We burned a dozen of them. Next time your village won't be so quick to help those smuggling boats.

VILLAGER
Where we supposed to live? We got nothing. You got my shop with the tax on contracts, on pamphlets, newspapers, glass, paper, playing cards.

ANDRE
It's to pay for your protection. We're fighting the French and the Indians. You want to be killed in your beds?

VILLAGER
That war is over! The only thing we need protection from is you!

ANDRE
Parliament ordered it, and you will pay.

VILLAGER
So when do we go to parliament?

ANDRE
Simmons boy. Suspected of burning a barn. We're taking him for trial.

VILLAGER

Where will the trial be? We got witnesses who can tell you where he was.

ANDRE

The trial will be in London.

VILLAGER

London? We'll never see him again!

ANDRE

(perusing a teenager)
And whose pretty girl are you?

SECOND VILLAGER

That's my daughter.

ANDRE

Change the quartering order. I'll be billeting with this family here.

SECOND VILLAGER

And who pays for your food?

ANDRE

You are, of course. It's a privilege to serve the Crown.

SECOND VILLAGER

I won't have it.

ANDRE

Then we'll remove you, and you can go starve with the Willetts.

THIRD VILLAGER

The girl is engaged to be married. To me.

ANDRE

Perkins. How many more do we need for the Navy order? Take this lad down to town for the Navy.

THIRD VILLAGER

You're putting me in your Navy? To come back and hunt down my friends?

ANDRE

Or you can hang for desertion, your choice.

VILLAGER

You need to move our court back to the city. You shut down the state house, cancelled our laws - we don't know who owns what. We can't even have a town meeting to clean up the mess you created. Our records are in town.

ANDRE

You want to pass a law, submit it in writing, it will be reviewed. In London.

VILLAGER

When will we get it back?

ANDRE

Parliament is done for the year. Hunting season for the nobility.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD NEAR TRENTON - DAY

A river, at dusk. A windy sleet storm. Gigantic chunks of ice float down the river. A small boat loaded with men and a cannon sinks near the shoreline. The men scramble out. Observing is their commander. WASHINGTON is 45, tall, red hair. HAMILTON, his aide, is 22.

WAINWRIGHT

Sir, the short-termers, they want to go home. Enlistment's up.

A crowd of suspicious soldiers gathers.

SOLDIER

I can go whenever I want.

SECOND SOLDIER

Says so right on the contract.

SOLDIER

We had enough. Sorry, sir. Came here for a war, a real army.

WASHINGTON

My brave boys. I know you are done with your enlistment. You did your time. You have done all I asked. You have worn yourselves out with hardships. But your country is at stake, your wives, your homes. I do not know how to spare you.

(MORE)

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)

If you stay a month longer, you will render that service to the cause of liberty which you probably never can do again.

A long pause. A single soldier steps forward. Then more. Then almost all.

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)

And by the way, we're attacking again. You want a real war?... Those of you who only came for the money, go back home. I'd rather have you fighting for the other side. Those of you who want to be free, man your boats.

EXT. NEAR PRINCETON - NIGHT

Washington's camp. GREENE is an officer of 35. Washington is repairing his tattered uniform.

WASHINGTON

Got to put my damned teeth in. Just one real victory, that would get Congress off their asses.

GREENE

What about Trenton?

WASHINGTON

We surprised German mercenaries, they didn't give a damn, they didn't even post sentries. They surrendered. I mean a real victory.

GREENE

Sir? Remember that fight in New York? Your army was a mess. The few men who had guns only seemed to fire them when they were drunk.

WASHINGTON

Yes, I lost New York. Congress never tires of reminding me.

GREENE

We got crushed. Lost half our supplies and a thousand deserters.

WASHINGTON

Greene, we're rather busy.

GREENE

Did you learn anything from New York? What was your mistake?

WASHINGTON

I split my forces. Half on Manhattan and half in Brooklyn.

GREENE

And they killed you... Our spies came in. The redcoats split their army. Half of them are here, the other half in Princeton. Want to pay em back for New York?

WASHINGTON

Good God. You're sure?

GREENE

Sure as anything can be out there.

WASHINGTON

Keep a company here, keep the fires going, make a godawful noise with picks and shovels. Make the Brits think we're digging a massive defense line.

HAMILTON

But not really.

WASHINGTON

But not really. They can dig a new latrine for all I care. Four in the morning, pull all your men out and follow us. Greene, leave a scout behind so they don't get lost.

INT. WASHINGTON'S TENT - NIGHT

Washington's tent near Brandywine; Honeyman reporting in, Hamilton listens.

HONEYMAN

Yes, sir, the spies all agree.

WASHINGTON

For once.

HONEYMAN

The Brits did run all the way to New York. But now they're back.

WASHINGTON

They think they win the war if they chase us out of Philadelphia.

HONEYMAN

They brought so many ships, they blocked the river.

WASHINGTON

How many ships?

HONEYMAN

Stopped counting at 200. 200 ships.

WASHINGTON

They have more ships than I have cannon.

HONEYMAN

They're nine miles off, coming fast. How did they find the road so fast?

HAMILTON

They have better maps than we do.

WASHINGTON

I need real maps!

EXT. RIVER BANK - NIGHT

Near Brandywine, fog sets in. Chaos, FIRING, American troops fall, survivors run. LAFAYETTE, a French nobleman of 20, tries to restore order.

LAFAYETTE

Alright, Continentals, guide on me, we're getting out!

SOLDIER

Can't bloody see you!

LAFAYETTE

Go up the hill. Long as you're going up, you're fine. Just look with your feet.

SOLDIER

It's that Frenchman, Lafayette.

WAINWRIGHT

Who cares, just climb.

The Yanks begin to climb under fire.

GREENE

Sir, we'll have to leave our
cannon.

WASHINGTON

I don't think we can even find our
cannon in this fog. Bollocks!

INT. WASHINGTON'S TENT - NIGHT

Near Brandywine. Hamilton brings Lafayette to Washington who
is emerging from the loo.

HAMILTON

Who is this? Wants to come to your
tent, I tried to shoo him off -

WASHINGTON

Lafayette. Please, come in. Got the
flux again. God, you are young.
Nice job organizing that retreat.
Cool head for a young man.

LAFAYETTE

Well, we're not going to win
anything with our retreats.

WASHINGTON

So, Brandywine, give me the truth.
Hit me with the bark still on it.

LAFAYETTE

Sir, I came to learn, not to teach.

WASHINGTON

Don't be silly. You know this
business better than I do. When did
you start training for the army?

LAFAYETTE

I was eleven. I was an officer at
thirteen, a musketeer at fourteen.

WASHINGTON

So, tell me.

LAFAYETTE

Well, you didn't protect your flank
of course. Your troops couldn't
form a straight battle line if you
tied them all to a rope.

(MORE)

LAFAYETTE (CONT'D)

You've got deserters in the woods.
If Howe had brought in cavalry,
your army would have been
destroyed.

WASHINGTON

I was confused. There was a fog.

LAFAYETTE

It was foggy on both sides of the
field. The Tories did fine.

WASHINGTON

Congress is leaving. I've lost New
York and Philadelphia. This is more
than you bargained for, if you want
to go back to -

LAFAYETTE

I can't. King Louis ordered me not
to come. If I go home I'll be
arrested. If you lose, I have no
country I can go to.

WASHINGTON

Well, you saw my disaster so
clearly, help me write my report to
Congress. What's the date?

LAFAYETTE

September eleventh.

INT. WASHINGTON'S TENT - DAY

Near Germantown. Lafayette reporting in to Washington who is
chewing on some very vague-looking meat.

WASHINGTON

Starting to dream of roast beef.
Roast anything.

LAFAYETTE

It's a miracle! British army up
north, got caught by General Gates,
place called Saratoga. Brits
surrendered, the whole army! It
gets better.

WASHINGTON

Better?

LAFAYETTE

Down here, the Brits, General Howe, split their army again, half in Philadelphia, half out here. He thinks he can destroy you with half of his part of the army.

WASHINGTON

Rather insulting. But he may be right.

LAFAYETTE

If you can follow up Saratoga with a win here, the English may give up and go home forever.

WASHINGTON

I have an idea - no, it's absurd -

LAFAYETTE

Sir?

WASHINGTON

We split into four forces. One hits from the east, one from the west. Then the other two forces attack from even further out, one east, one west. Flank the English and crush them.

LAFAYETTE

Are you serious?

WASHINGTON

My men can't handle a simple maneuver, why not try something complicated?...You said all great battles are won with flanking attacks.

LAFAYETTE

I also said splitting your forces is insane... Well, they won't expect it, will they? Have your boys wear white rags in their hats so they don't shoot each other.

EXT. TREE LINE - NIGHT

Fog near Germantown. American forces trying to organize. Washington, Hamiton and Greene confer.

WASHINGTON
I can' believe it. Fog again.

HAMILTON
Dawn is coming.

WASHINGTON
Are all four columns in place yet?

HAMILTON
No sir, only one.

American troops push British pickets into the town. The Brits fall back to a stone house.

GREENE
Sir, we can just bypass it.

WASHINGTON
No, then they can hit us in the rear.

American cannonfire on the house, without success. American infantry attack and are driven back.

WAINWRIGHT
I'm out!

CLARK
Ammo here!

WAINWRIGHT
Sir, we're all out of cartridges.

CAPTAIN
Dammit, pull them back, try to form a line back near that house.

Elsewhere on the field.

GREENE
Can't see a damn thing.

A shot. Then more.

WAINWRIGHT
Hold your fire! Continentals!

CLARK
Who are you?

SOLDIE
Ninth Virginia! See the bloody hat?

CLARK
Can't see anything.

SOLDIER
Where the hell are the Brits!

CLARK
Over there. Let's go then!

Part of Greene's column attacks the British and break through, but are surrounded and surrender.

GREENE
Come on, let's break them out!

CAPTAIN
We can't save them. They surrendered. We go in, we'll be surrendering too.

GREENE
Let's form up on that hill. Be ready, the English will be coming after us.

They line up on a hill and repel a British attack.

INT. WASHINGTON'S TENT - NIGHT

Washington and Lafayette confer.

WASHINGTON
They chased us nine miles. How angry does a man have to be to run nine miles?

LAFAYETTE
Both sides thought they could end the war in one day. We're lucky we survived.

WASHINGTON
Yes, you were right, I was stupid. Splitting the army into four bits.

LAFAYETTE
(laughs)
No, I loved that part. It was so insane it might have worked.

WASHINGTON
Sometimes you roll the dice.

LAFAYETTE

Just your luck, complicated attack with untrained men - and then the fog rolled in. Once in a while you need to do something crazy.

WASHINGTON

(with paper)

Now I get to explain everything to Martha. Bollocks!

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

Soldiers begin to rise in panic as SHOTS are heard.

SOLDIER

It's coming from the northern end.

Shots.

HAMILTON

No, it's the southern end.

SOLDIER

It's both, they have two snipers on us. Where are the damn patrols? Who's on watch?

HAMILTON

Captain, where are the sentries?

WALKER

I'll go find them -

SOLDIER

Already found them. One sentry asleep, the other is missing.

HAMILTON

Dammit, we need them patrolling all four sectors!

SOLDIER

Sir, they're starving, they can barely stand.

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

Two soldiers appear at the nurse's tent.

SOLDIER

Miss Mary, you need to come out.

She emerges and wraps a blanket over her under-bits.

MARY

Did someone get hurt? I'll get my -

She sees the soldiers pointing their guns at her.

SOLDIER

Off to Hamilton with you, miss.

MARY

What the-

SOLDIER

Go on.

They lead her to a stump in front of Washington's tent, and find Hamilton. Wainwright arrives.

HAMILTON

My puny little intelligence service is still functioning, Mary.

MARY

What?

HAMILTON

You lied to us about Smith.

MARY

No, I didn't -

HAMILTON

You didn't tell us the whole story. Smith, this spy, someone you know?

MARY

From the warehouse. Smuggler.

HAMILTON

Come now. What else do you know?

MARY

He carries a pistol and he's a crack shot with a musket.

HAMILTON

Alright.

MARY

He can ride but he can also cross-country on foot.

HAMILTON

You're not my only source of information. How well do you know Smith?

MARY

He has a dueling scar on his chest.

HAMILTON

Mary.

MARY

I know him very, very well.

HAMILTON

Afraid I need more than that -

WAINWRIGHT

Colonel -

HAMILTON

I need to know. She married a British soldier, and had some sort of, don't know what it is, with a British spy. My question has nothing to do with fumbling around in the sheets, it's about loyalty. Do you love this man? Smith?

MARY

All you need to know is that he got my friend killed. Sue Pruden. I want him dead. Either you believe me or you don't.

HAMILTON

Didn't answer my question.

MARY

A woman's heart is quite a tangle. I can love him and wish him dead. More common than you think.

HAMILTON

Had a mistress like that once.

MARY

Not surprised.

HAMILTON

I do apologize for this.

No, you're good at your job. Girl signs up to fight a war, she needs to leave her lace knickers behind. So you believe me then?

HAMILTON

The sniper who's been shooting at us? It's Smith. I'm rather vexed.

MARY

Oh God.

Washington emerges from his tent.

WASHINGTON

What do you think?

HAMILTON

Sir, you've been happily married?

WASHINGTON

Almost twenty years.

HAMILTON

Have a woman ever hated you? Wanted you dead?

WASHINGTON

Not even Sally Fairfax.

HAMILTON

Mary hates this man Smith. And we need nurses. I say we keep her.

WASHINGTON

Keep an eye on her. Don't tell her our plans.

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

Soldiers march. Washington and Greene observe.

SOLDIER

Tuesday, my turn with the shoes.

SECOND SOLDIER

I know. Look at my feet.

SOLDIER

Fine. You owe me Thursday. My turn.

Behind them are the soldier's bloody footprints.

GREENE
General, I think we're done here.

WASHINGTON
Done?

GREENE
Now only one man in three has shoes at all. The rest are barefoot.

WASHINGTON
So we're giving up?

GREENE
No, sir. Look at those two ridges up near the river, the Schuylkill.

WASHINGTON
It's far enough north so the Brits can't surprise us...

GREENE
But close enough to stop the Brits from taking the whole countryside.

WASHINGTON
If it's on a hill, why does it have that silly name?

GREENE
Valley Forge.

EXT. CAMP - DAY

Vallet Forge. Washington meets the chaplain.

REVEREND
Been looking for you at services.

WASHINGTON
You tried to shame me in front of my men, for not taking communion.

REVEREND
Be helpful if we had your help building a Christian nation.

WASHINGTON
We're not building a Christian nation - a lot of us came here to get away from exactly that.

Mary approaches.

MARY

General? I was talking to Hamilton.
He said you might have some opium.

WASHINGTON

So much for keeping confidences.
I'm in pain from the teeth. I used
opium but it's gone now. How much
you want for that horse of yours?

MARY

He's my best mate. Keep your money.

WASHINGTON

How's your husband?

She shrugs and sighs. It's painful.

MARY

I'm not just a midwife, I can knock
about as a doctor, for a need. What
other problems have you had?

WASHINGTON

I got over malaria, smallpox,
diphtheria and tuberculosis...

MARY

Good God.

WASHINGTON

Can't read without glasses and I
can't hear well. And dysentery.

MARY

God, what are you doing here?
You'll die!

WASHINGTON

(laughs)

When I came out here, my wife gave
me hair powder. As if I'm going to
powder my hair in front of men with
no shoes... I'm out here because
those men are out here. You've
heard of the prison ships?

MARY

Even my husband thought it's awful.

WASHINGTON

Our boys are dying on the prison
ships. The English torture, starve
those boys on purpose.

(MORE)

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)

You know why? Not long ago the British admiral gave them a chance - you can go free, long as you switch sides, join the British army. Know how many switched?

MARY

Not many?

WASHINGTON

It was exactly none. Not one, out of thousands. Couldn't be more proud. Those boys on the ships, these lads with no shoes. Even now I'm not worthy to lead them, ask for all this sacrifice. What would I be worth if I ran back home? Give me a hand, need the latrine.

She helps him up; he is sore all over. But by the time he is outside the tent, he is ramrod straight. An actor going onstage.

EXT. CAMP - DAY

VON STEUBEN, an energetic 47-year-old German in an impeccable uniform arrives with two very young men and a beautiful Italian greyhound.

VON STEUBEN

Is there an officer here?

He looks at an untidy officer with distaste, Ben WALKER, 24.

WALKER

Walker, sir. Captain.

VON STEUBEN

I am Friedrich Wilhelm August Heinrich Ferdinand von Steuben. I come from Prussia. I was on the king's general staff. Do you speak German or French?

WALKER

Um, a bit.

Von Steuben sighs, points to LOUIS, the 17-year-old boy with him. Another boy just like him, PIERRE, also waits.

VON STEUBEN

This is my aide de camp, Louis de Pontière.

(MORE)

VON STEUBEN (CONT'D)

My military secretary Pierre Etienne Duponceau. The dog, his name is Azor. He needs meat immediately.

WALKER

We haven't had meat in days -

VON STEUBEN

Come Schatzie, find yourself a nice rabbit in the woods. No more kisses for Papa, I'm busy. You will take me to your general. Louis, viens mon cher. Pierre! To my tent.

Pops into his tent for a moment.

LAFAYETTE

This Steuben fellow -

WALKER

Von Steuben?

LAFAYETTE

I think he added the "von" himself. This Blumenmadchen was never on the king's staff. They arrested him for playing around with boys.

WALKER

The general hired him to train our soldiers to fight. He offered his services for free.

LAFAYETTE

Free help is usually worth exactly what you pay for it.

VON STEUBEN

(reemerging)

Who is this French fellow?

LAFAYETTE

The Marquis de Lafayette.

VON STEUBEN

Tell me about these Americans.

LAFAYETTE

There's a lot of fight in them. They're angry. But they're farmers.

VON STEUBEN

Angry farmers.

LAFAYETTE

They can shoot ducks and geese. I intend to teach them the drill.

VON STEUBEN

That's what Washington brought me here for. Of course I'm only a baron -

LAFAYETTE

No no, you give it a try. You even look the part. The men think I'm Washington's drummer boy, if you get my meaning.

VON STEUBEN

Tell me about their last battle.

LAFAYETTE

(laughs)

Well, Washington is still learning too. The four-prong assault in the fog. My friends in Louis' court loved that - they were almost as impressed with Washington's lunacy at Germantown, as they were with the win at Saratoga. It showed panache. If Louis decides to help, it could change the whole war.

EXT. CAMP - DAY

Washington looks over his camp.

SOLDIER

Firecake and pepper soup.

WASHINGTON

Firecake?

SOLDIER

Flour and water mashed together. We were lucky to get flour at all.

WASHINGTON

And pepper soup?

SOLDIER

We take water, boil a cow's stomach in it, for flavor.

WASHINGTON

For flavor.

SOLDIER

Take out the stomach, add pepper.
There's your broth. We were lucky
to get the water. Brits were
watching the river, there wasn't
enough snow to drink - just enough
to make sure we were wet day and
night.

WASHINGTON

What about that baker?

CLARK

Got a visit from the Brits, scared
the piss out of him. So he stole
our money and he won't sell to us.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

American soldiers in a town square, surrounded by locals with
muskets.

TOWNSMAN

You steal our food, bother our
girls. Next time, we're just going
to start shooting.

HONEYMAN

(aside to a soldier)
Every time we do this, we create
more followers for the king.
Congress needs to get moving and
feed us.

EXT. CAMP - DAY

Mary bothering Washington who is consoling a sick soldier.

MARY

They're dressed in rags, no
blankets, no shoes, they freeze to
death, or starve. That regiment
there has 200 men and 100 shirts. A
quarter are unfit. They bundle
together under the trees like old
married couples. I think you've
lost another dozen, desertion.

WASHINGTON

Put out an order. Ten dollars to
the man who can find a substitute
for shoes, use raw hides.

HAMILTON

Serious? I may make the shoes myself.

WASHINGTON

And any deserter who returns by the first of the year, all pardoned. No questions asked.

HAMILTON

A bonus if they bring bread and boots.

MARY

And then pray the typhoid doesn't come for another go.

HAMILTON

Remember, her husband's a Tory.

WASHINGTON

Nothing here the Brits don't know already. Thanks for your help.

MARY

Any sign of that bastard Smith?... Fine, don't tell me. Just find him and kill him.

EXT. FIELD NEAR CAMP - DAY

Von Steuben, as he is in every scene, is in immaculate condition and full of energy. Walker accompanies.

VON STEUBEN

Walker, come with me. Come Azor. Take me to each of your regiments.

WALKER

I beg your pardon?

VON STEUBEN

I'm looking them all over.

WALKER

You'll want to meet their officers.

VON STEUBEN

No, I won't.

WALKER

You're going to talk directly to the men? The captains will go insane.

VON STEUBEN

I think your captains are not worth the powder to blow them to pieces...Present company excepted.

He sees two companies marching toward each other. The units collide, swearing ensues.

VON STEUBEN (CONT'D)

That company on the left.

WALKER

It's a regiment, sir. What's left of it.

VON STEUBEN

The commander?

WALKER

A politician, out of work but rich.

VON STEUBEN

Bring the regiment here, if you can, without trampling me to death.

With Walker's help the thundering herd slowly rumbles into a clearing. Hamilton approaches.

VON STEUBEN (CONT'D)

Well, there are eight of you who are actually in line. I'll take them. You seem to be cleaning your musket properly - I'll take you too. And this one, and that one. The rest of you are going back to your commander, I'm afraid.

HAMILTON

What's going on?

VON STEUBEN

I go through your regiments until I find a hundred men who look like they can count to twenty without taking off their shoes. We teach them to march and shoot, and they teach the rest. Did the general give you a copy of the army manual?

HAMILTON

Manuals. There are a dozen or so.

He looks at them.

VON STEUBEN

Each regiment has a different manual? This one's French. We write one manual for the whole army, and throw these out. Sheiss paper for the latrine. Ah, the latrine!

HAMILTON

Sir?

VON STEUBEN

Up there? I can smell it. We tear down this camp and rebuild it. Tents in rows, with streets in between. Give the order: the men do not piss and shit outside their tents! Use the latrine! I don't care how cold it is!

HAMILTON

Sir?

VON STEUBEN

And next - what's the first thing every soldier learns, going all the way back to Julius Caesar?

HAMILTON

Sir?

VON STEUBEN

Shit flows downhill! What happens to those latrines when it rains?

HAMILTON

Shit flows downhill.

VON STEUBEN

You didn't figure this out yourselves? Are you surprised you have a hundred men with disease? Dig latrines at the bottom of the hill. The kitchen goes at the top. And remove the dead animals. Louis, to my tent. My head needs a rub.

WASHINGTON
 (watching from the trees)
 Who's running this army, me or Von
 Steuben?

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

A hilltop artillery piece with a crew of six including
 MCCAULEY; Greene observing, as well as McCauley's wife MOLLY.
 The cannon fires at a nearby British company and recoils.

MCCAULEY
 (hitting the deck)
 Aw, Jesus.

MOLLY
 (helping him sit up)
 What happened?

MCCAULEY
 Wheel went over my foot.

GREENE
 Sergeant, you're not on line -

MOLLY
 Help me get him out of the way.

She and a soldier drag McCauley away. Soldiers reload the
 gun. Mary arrives to tend McCauley.

GREENE
 Miss -

MOLLY
 (to Mary)
 That's my man with the foot. Give
 him back to me in two boots.
 (to McCauley)
 Don't move. Do what she tells ya.
 (to the crew)
 You boys turn that gun to the left.

GREENE
 Missus, get out of the way -

MOLLY
 Boys, look. They're coming left and
 then up the hill. Get the gun
 pointed left and lower the muzzle.

The crew looks at her, and then steers the gun per her
 instructions.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

A bit more. Now get out of the way.
You see, husband, you get your
bloody feet out of the way before
you set the fuse!

A perfect shot scatters a charging British unit.

GREENE

Erm, Missus.

MOLLY

(to the crew)
Alright, load her up again!....
(to Greene)
What the hell do you want?...
(to the crew, now
reloading)
Same but further back, they're
retreating. Yes, raise the muzzle!
(to the fleeing Brits)
Want some more, ya stupid lobsters?

She fires one more perfect shot; she waggles her hips and
arms in an attempt to urge the ball in the right direction.
And turns around.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

Stop staring at me ass, get your
muskets, they may come back! Jesus
save your ass if you're not loaded!

A British platoon does indeed charge the artillery team, and
musket fire drives them away.

Greene steps behind her. She senses he's there and raises her
botefeux (torch), ready to pound him.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

Bollocks, almost took your head
off!

GREENE

They're retreating, everyone take a
breath, get some water.

Molly runs to her husband.

MARY

I'll fix him proper. You clear out.

GREENE

(offers Molly water)

Would you hit me if I asked you to cut your hair and put on breeches?

MOLLY

Take your head right off with this thing!

GREENE

You fired the cannon straighter than your husband ever did. You shot better than my whole battery.

MOLLY

I hunt geese at home, a few ducks. Used to be a surveyor, I can read the field. I miss my own musket.

GREENE

How would you like your own cannon?

MOLLY

What? Cannon?

GREENE

I'm short of gun captains. You can have an enlistment fee...

MOLLY

In American dollars? Latrine paper.

GREENE

And full rations like the rest...

MOLLY

My dog back home eats better.

GREENE

And you can kill all the English you want.

MOLLY

Where do I make my X?

GREENE

Shall I break the news to your husband?

MOLLY

Oh no no no. Pleasure's all mine.

(to Mary)

Is he -

MARY

Stay clear. He's not going to lose the foot but he needs a splint.

MOLLY

How much you want for that horse? I could use him for -

MARY

Not for all the tea in London.

MOLLY

(to Greene)

...My own cannon? Sure it'll blow the ducks all to hell.

GREENE

You can't take the cannon home with you. It's just for the war.

MOLLY

I wanted to put it in the front garden, impress the neighbors.

GREENE

Get the boys on the road. Boys, this is Sergeant McCauley, it's her gun now. Any questions?

SOLDIER

Hell, no, sir. Molly can shoot the moon out of the sky.

GREENE

I would say your husband is a lucky man. Until today. ...If you could hide the fact that...Um, your hair -
(waves his arms)

It's impossible. Every man for a mile can see you're a woman.

MOLLY

Too bloody right. Come, husband.

She helps her husband onto the wagon. Kisses him and hugs him.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

Scared the By Jesus out of me.
(touches his face)
Get you some water.

EXT. CAMP - DAY

Washington confers with Mary and Greene.

MARY

The smallpox tent, we're losing one man in three. We need to inoculate.

WASHINGTON

Once we inoculate, they are contagious for days, and they're not fit to fight. If the Brits comes down on us, we're helpless. And some of them will die.

MARY

Sir, some of your soldiers are inoculating themselves secretly. The whole country is sick with it.

WASHINGTON

Congress can't even find bread and boots, these scarecrows can find the pox vaccine...That man Smith? He's back with the British general's staff, wining and dining.

MARY

Bastard.

WASHINGTON

Nathaniel.

GREENE

Sir. I've got my regiments doing their musket evolutions --

WASHINGTON

Got a nasty one. I need you to step away from the regiments for now.

Greene is devastated.

GREENE

Sir, may I speak freely? Is this about Germantown?

WASHINGTON

No, it's -

GREENE

My men ran two miles, I got to the field quick as I could, they fought like madmen when they engaged -

WASHINGTON

I know.

GREENE

Sir, if you don't trust me, how can my men trust me?

WASHINGTON

You got the wrong end of the stick. I'm giving you the hardest job in this army, because you're the one man I can trust.

GREENE

Thank you sir.

WASHINGTON

But you're still not going to like it. I need a quartermaster.

GREENE

Serving up bread and hay and boot nails?

WASHINGTON

If we don't get supplies, the men will scatter or die. I need you to scour the area for food and clothes, it's actually more dangerous than leading infantry. I need a man with some sense.

GREENE

When the army is ready to fight, I want to fight again. Sir.

WASHINGTON

I promise. You'll get a command.

Greene crosses to his men.

GREENE

We need food. Some of these farmers love King George. Some can be persuaded, some will shoot us.

SOLDIERS

Or sell us to the Brits, soon as we go.

GREENE

We are not marauders. We're not out to steal and rob.

(MORE)

GREENE (CONT'D)

Those people need to eat too. We cannot defeat the enemy by becoming the enemy.

SOLDIER

But we need food.

GREENE

Yes. We can't go back to camp without food. Especially this first time - the men see us empty handed, they'll desert.

SOLDIER

So we can't steal from the farmers who try to kill us?

GREENE

Use your judgment, don't tell me the details. Same for those Tory farmers who hide their cows in the woods. And leave the women alone. Dead serious.

CLARK

Two miles down, there's a farm. Tory man, shot at us before. Has a herd of pigs.

GREENE

You said pigs?

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

Greene's men herding pigs as quickly as they can; shots heard in the distance.

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

Pig herd arrives in camp to great cheers.

INT. SICK TENT - NIGHT

Mary and another nurse treat patients; Wainwright brings them water. Washington watches.

MARY

(to Wainwright)

You're a lifesaver.

(to a patient)

Alright, another week on your back.

SOLDIER

Really, I feel better --

NURSE

He looks fine to me -

MARY

Still has a fever. Boy almost died!

NURSE

Says he's alright -

MARY

Look at his face, it's still - ow!
Who the hell pinched my arse?

She turns around and then looks at the soldier.

SOLDIER

And a fine arse it is.

WAINRIGHT

Oi, keep your fingers to yourself!

MARY

Fine, made your point. Tomorrow if
your fever's down, off you go. Keep
your fingers to yourself.

Washington enters with Hamilton.

MARY (CONT'D)

We need to inoculate. I'll teach
them how - it's a cut on the hand.

WASHINGTON

We'll do everyone. Teach me too.

MARY

Sir, you can't possibly --

WASHINGTON

I already had smallpox. Why do you
think I have no children?

MARY

Sorry, sir.

WASHINGTON

How many horses do we have left?

HAMILTON

Seven hundred died. Dealing with
the carcasses is a major problem.

WASHINGTON

Surprised the boys aren't eating them.

MARY

(appalled)

You keep em away from my ride!

WASHINGTON

Get these men washing their clothes. Cut windows into their huts, get fresh air in - and patch the roofs so they're not wet from the rain all the time.

HAMILTON

Yes, sir.

WASHINGTON

Now all we need to worry about is the typhoid, the dysentery, pneumonia, food and the British army. ...Why in God's name doesn't Howe attack and finish us off?

EXT. FIELD NEAR CAMP - DAY

Von Steuben shouts in French and German; Walker, in English.

WALKER

(shouting and gesturing)

The Baron has asked me to curse you in English for your stupidity. I'm a Methodist minister, I don't really know how to do that. He says each of you is the son of a - what? Son of a hedgehog? Muskrat? And you're all a bunch of - don't know that one either, but it doesn't sound like a compliment. Oh, no, German. And the next man who drops his weapon is going to get a bayonet right up in his --

VON STEUBEN

(pantomiming with Walker)

ARSCHLOCH! ARSCHLOCH!

WALKER

In a very sensitive place. Stop smiling, Atkins, why don't you hang your heads in shame so he knows I did a good job.

VON STEUBEN
Louis! My tent!

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

A soldier runs to Mary.

SOLDIER
Miss, he's here, I saw him!

Mary and three American soldiers run up a ridge and find Smith and two British spies. In no time, six guns are out.

SMITH
Well, this is a tangle. Three guns,
three more guns.

SOLDIER
Stay behind me.

SMITH
One thing you can count on, is that
I would never, ever shoot Mary.

MARY
Like you would never hurt Susan.

SMITH
Mary, tell them what a good shot I
am. Save a lot of bother.

SOLDIER
Is he good?

MARY
Not if you shoot him first.

SMITH
Nobody do anything stupid.

Mary approaches Smith.

MARY
So it was you shooting at us.

SMITH
I do miss you. A girl who can hold
her rum, knows every song under the
sun. Don't you miss me?

MARY
Oh, bollocks! You risked your life
to come here and mock me?

SMITH

I do miss you.

MARY

That ship has sailed, love.

SMITH

You think it was easy to throw the net over Sue Pruden? I was there for the hanging.

MARY

God, please don't.

SMITH

Sorry. She chose the wrong army. Like you did.

MARY

Why are you here?

SMITH

Not spying, God knows. Everyone on the river knows your army is at death's door. You've got this German fancy boy teaching your men to shoot. Not making much progress, is he? I came to warn you, Mary.

MARY

Let them go.

SMITH

Come, I've seen these boys shoot, you have little to worry about.

One Yank lifts his gun to fire at Smith; Smith fires a pistol at his attacker and a second at another Yank. The other Brits aim at the remaining American. Smith examines the wounded.

SMITH (CONT'D)

That was a lung and that, oh, the heart. Take your friend back down the hill.

She and the surviving Yank back away and leave.

MARY

That son of a bitch. He's taunting me. Let's go find Washington.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

A new American spy running across the rooftops in the rain, bleeding, Tories in pursuit on the ground. They stop and listen. He comes to the end of the street and runs out of roof. He leaps from a two-story to a one-story, and then leaps to the ground. The second leap snaps his ankle.

TORY

Back alley, we got him.

The spy hobbles through some trees to a creek, which is swollen with rain. He rolls into the water, drifts with the current. British soldiers arrive on the bank; Smith is with them, smiling.

TORY (CONT'D)

Can't see a thing, sir.

TORY OFFICER

Down the river, then.

Clark and Honeyman run down the bank, ahead of the Tories but behind the floating spy. The Tories see them and fire. Clark dumps Honeyman to the ground.

TORY

Never find them in this mess, sir.

TORY OFFICER

Nonsense.

TORY

So what do we do, sir?

TORY OFFICER

Back to town.

Clark and Honeyman see the Brits wander off.

HONEYMAN

Taylor! Taylor!

SPY

Behind you. Snagged the tree trunk.

They pull him to the riverbank; blood everywhere.

SPY (CONT'D)

Shot three times, and I did for my ankle. That man Smith - I saw him with the redcoats. He smiled at me. The bastard.

CLARK

How do we get him back to camp?

HONEYMAN

He'll be dead in a few hours.

CLARK

Taylor -

SPY

Seventeen cannon. Tell Washington -
they're doing an ambush up north.
We need more agents and better
maps.

CLARK

Sorry. Your mother's in Boston?

SPY

Even money they come back with a
platoon. Get going!

EXT. CAMP - DAY

Washington confers with Steuben.

VON STEUBEN

The thing to do now is nothing.

WASHINGTON

Nothing? The Tories are running all
through the woods every night.

VON STEUBEN

They're trying to make you panic.
General Howe, read his mind.

WASHINGTON

But look at his movements - he
wants to cross the Delaware.

VON STEUBEN

It's a fake. You think like a
soldier. Don't look at his troops.
Look at his boats.

WASHINGTON

What boats?

VON STEUBEN

Exactly. He has no boats. A trick
to lure you out.

(MORE)

VON STEUBEN (CONT'D)

...Your men are afraid. You can't let them see you panic.

Nearby, Mary comforts her dying husband.

MARY

They've given me more time to visit you. You know why, don't you?

TOMKINS

Don't stay too long - these colonists live like pigs. Disease is everywhere.

MARY

I couldn't stop the infection. I don't know when they're going to let me see you again. Let's not quarrel anymore, alright? I don't know how much time we have left.

SOLDIER

Miss?

MARY

Yes, Sergeant.

TOMKINS

Mary, I'm sorry. About everything.

MARY

There's no point in going into all that. Just try and eat all you can.

SOLDIER

Miss?

MARY

Sorry. Where is your general?

SOLDIER

Up the hill, looking at the kitchen, but he's awfully busy -

WAINWRIGHT

How is he, then?

Mary gives him a helpless look, approaches Washington's tent.

HAMILTON

General's busy right now -

SOLDIER

They're talking strategy. She's British.

MARY

Just a minute of your time! My husband is one of your prisoners.

WASHINGTON

You want me to set him free?

MARY

General, my husband is going to die in a matter of days.

WASHINGTON

I'm sorry. Not sure what I can do. He gets the same rations my men do.

MARY

General, my husband is loyal to the Crown. I'm not.

WASHINGTON

I don't understand.

MARY

It made for an unquiet house this year. Time for us to be free, go our own way.

WASHINGTON

Us?

MARY

Americans. Us. I want to help.

WASHINGTON

Help how?

MARY

I'm not just some housewife, I have a job. I'm a midwife.

WASHINGTON

We have pregnant women in camp, but we're mostly men, you know.

MARY

I know all these valleys. When a girl reaches her birthing time, I need to know every little goat trail.

WASHINGTON

And your husband's a British officer. And of course Smith. You see why I'm suspicious? You could lead one of my units into an inferno.

HAMILTON

Sir, we need a map of the north valley. Why not send her off with a platoon, Lieutenant Urquhart?

WASHINGTON

Why Urquhart?

HAMILTON

Because he's an idiot. If he walks into an ambush, we're better off.

WASHINGTON

My problem is finding officers. Got a rich idiots, daredevils, whip-crackers who beat their men, officers who want to be friends with everyone...You're Mary...

MARY

Mary Tomkins.

WASHINGTON

If you're caught out in the valley, they'll kill you. Shed all the tears you want, they will string you up.

MARY

Sue Pruden, the girl who was spying on the Tory camp, they strung her up? My best friend. Please --

WASHINGTON

(smiling)

Franklin would love this. Go make me a map with Urquhart. You can't take your horse.

MARY

And when the time comes, I hunt down that bastard Smith. The spy.

She walks off with Hamilton.

MARY (CONT'D)

How stupid is this Urquhart?

HAMILTON

He means well...

Congressmen arrive in camp, with GENERAL CONWAY.

WASHINGTON

Gentleman of Congress... General Conway, don't recall giving you leave to travel.

CONGRESSMAN

Conway brought us some disturbing reports about our situation here.

WASHINGTON

Our situation?

CONGRESSMAN

When are you going to take the advance, attack the British?

WASHINGTON

So you came to look me over.

CONGRESSMAN

The Pennsylvania delegates complained you're not protecting them out in the countryside.

WASHINGTON

You can't even give me enough boots to put my whole army on its feet all at the same time, and you want me to protect every village and farm in Pennsylvania?

CONGRESSMAN

You need help. Perhaps General Gates, fresh off his victory at Saratoga...

WASHINGTON

Congress. You seem to have little sympathy for my men, waiting in the snow for you to send blankets, but we feel great sympathy for you. How hard your job must be, criticizing this command from a soft chair by a fire, glass of madeira, miles away. Let me relieve you of your burden. Whenever Congress is no longer satisfied with my service, say the word and I will retire to Virginia.

He waits, his anger rising.

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)
Just say the word.

Silence. He walks away. A Congressman follows.

CONGRESSMAN
General, we don't have the power to raise taxes. We've got to beg all thirteen states for money and food.

WASHINGTON
Then beg. Lie. Steal. Rob. This army is about to blow away in the wind. You think my numbers are so small because the men are deserting, they've given up on me? We've lost two thousand, dead men, to sickness. Because of you.

A shot nicks a nearby tree and they take cover.

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)
Where are the damn sentries?

CONGRESSMAN
General, every state wants the next state over to do the heavy lifting.

WASHINGTON
If you men can't do it, we need men who can. You do nothing for the troops, you're not even doing anything for the civilians, except argue. My couriers can't even find you half the time.

CONGRESSMAN
The British ran us out of Philadelphia. Our capital was in Lancaster, and now we're in York.

WASHINGTON
You'll be hiding in Indian country by summer.

CONGRESSMAN
We're writing articles of confederation, but they're as bad as what we have now.

WASHINGTON

They're rubbish. We need a strong government in the capital, wherever that is. Otherwise the nation will come apart into thirteen tiny bits, and the British will snap us up one by one.

CONGRESSMAN

Hancock quit. Got tired of the arguing and went home. This is Hancock! Quit.

WASHINGTON

You want me to do your job for you? Get back there. Find me food and boots.

CONGRESSMAN

And then what? I've defended you up and down. What are you doing here?

WASHINGTON

Every time I go into battle I face a gigantic army, and I lose. But I never surrender. I keep the army together, until our luck changes. If I can keep their morale together until spring, we have a chance.

EXT. CAMP - DAY

Mary approaches Wainwright who is chatting with his friends.

MARY

Can I borrow you for a minute?

WAINWRIGHT

Mary, what's wrong?

MARY

Is it that obvious?

WAINWRIGHT

Come over here.

MARY

Need to go out on the road, I can't face it alone. It's my husband -

WAINWRIGHT

Your husband -

MARY

This is why I never talk about him,
I come unraveled. Everyone I ever
knew in the world is three thousand
miles away, I'll never see them
again. My family, my hometown, the
girl who taught me my trade, it's
like they're dead or they never
lived. I had four people here to
hold me together. Lizzie went off
to New York. Smith is a bloody spy.
Sue Pruden -

WAINWRIGHT

I know about the girl.

MARY

And now my husband. He always knew
how to pick me up when I'm low.

WAINWRIGHT

So you came to me...

MARY

How sad it all that? I don't even
know you, and you're my friend -
you're all I have in the world.

WAINWRIGHT

Mary...

MARY

This is bollocks. Follow me. Just
help me with the rough bits.

EXT. CAMP - DAY

Mary and Wainwright approach a soldier near a mass grave by a
stand of saplings.

MARY

This is where my husband is?

SOLDIER

Yes, maam. Last to die, first to be
buried. Near that sapling.

Mary ties a ribbon on the sapling so she can find it later.
And she manages not to cry, because she's not alone.

MARY

Sweets, I don't know what to say.
You died so young.

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

I've gone over to the enemy. But I will say, you made me happy. Back home before the war, I was happy. You made me laugh. You didn't give me hooraw when I did my work. And then all this. Someday up there we'll meet and have a jar. And we'll laugh again. ...It must be a sad thing to die over the sea, far from everyone you know. But I'll never forget you, long as I live. ...Give me a minute here.

Wainwright walks away a bit.

EXT. FIELD NEAR CAMP - DAY

Von Steuben and his dog, before his chosen troops.

VON STEUBEN

Now, who is good with a musket?

SOLDIER

Been feeding my kin with it for years.

VON STEUBEN

How quickly can you load?

SOLDIER

Pretty damn quick, minute or so.

VON STEUBEN

Alright, you and me.

They stand beside each other, the other soldiers cheering them on. Steuben rapidly gets through the ten steps, fires into the air, and says -

VON STEUBEN (CONT'D)

You're dead.

While the soldiers works through his first load, Steuben starts another. Fires.

VON STEUBEN (CONT'D)

You're dead again.

SOLDIER

Hey, I got it!

VON STEUBEN

Not bad. I expected to kill you three times. You only allowed me two. A redcoat can do it in fifteen seconds. I can do it in twelve. Ein. Prime and load. Turn to the right, lift your weapon. Zwei. Pull out a cartridge, tear off the end with your teeth. Drei. Prime. Pull the hammer, pour some powder, not all of it! And close. Vier. About. Stand up the musket, pour the powder, the ball, the paper so the ball doesn't fall out. Funf. Draw ramrod. Sechs. Ram down cartridge. Sieben. Return rammers. Acht. Ready. Raise your musket. Neun. Present. Aim at your target. Zehn. And Fire. Try not to shoot me.

EXT. HILLTOP IN PENNSYLVANIA - DAY

URQUHART, Mary, Wainwright and a platoon on the move; the sun is sinking fast.

URQUHART

Let's stop here for the night.

MARY

Um, Lieutenant Urquhart -

URQUHART

What now? Let me make this clear. If you're part of this army, you execute my orders, make your map. If you're not part of this army, go back to your redcoat friends.

MARY

There are no trees up here -

URQUHART

Well, I can see that.

MARY

We're on the ridge, everyone down there can see you. You need to go down.

URQUHART
Want to lead us down into a trap?

MARY
Just get off the ridge.

URQUHART
We're miles from the city.

MARY
Corporal, pass me my blanket?

WAINWRIGHT
Right here, miss.

She lays her blanket, ten yards below the summit. Soon, the rest of the platoon has joined her.

URQUHART
Corporal, what are you doing? We can't see a thing from down there.

WAINWRIGHT
Valley's dark anyway. All I see is those horsemen running the trail.

Mary returns to the summit.

MARY
Horses, heading past the fork. They saw you, they're going to go get help. If they reach that fork before we do, we're trapped. They starve us out and then kill us.

URQUHART
It's a lie. She's working for them!

MARY
I'm heading for the fork. Anyone who wants to stay alive, come down the hill.

URQUHART
Put that woman under arrest!

Everyone but Urquhart runs down the hill.

MARY
Who's the best shot here?

WAINWRIGHT
Me and him, missus.

MARY

Past the bend in the road, horses
are coming. Shoot them both down,
but only if you have a sure shot.

WAINWRIGHT

Too dark?

SOLDIER

Yeah, and they're too fast.

WAINWRIGHT

Sorry, miss.

MARY

No, you did the right thing. Past
the fork, there's another fork,
leads up into the woods. But it's
impossible to see. You need to
trust me, and follow me close.

WAINWRIGHT

I can barely see you now.

MARY

Hell.

She pulls off her brown skirt, revealing a white underskirt.

MARY (CONT'D)

Can you see that? I'm not taking
off any more! Everybody, after me!

They run up the fork and into the trees.

WAINWRIGHT

Want your skirt back now? You're
like a lantern in the dark.

MARY

How poetic. Where's Urquhart -

WAINWRIGHT

Shh.

A tense minute. Sounds of horses. Yelling men. Shooting.

WAINWRIGHT (CONT'D)

Damn. They spotted the Lieutenant.
What if that idiot leads them here!

She climbs up about ten yards. A soldier follows.

MARY

The lieutenant is leading them away from us. I'll be damned.

Volley of shots, then silence. She goes back down.

MARY (CONT'D)

That jackass Urquhart. Saved our lives.

Soldier pulls out a wineskin.

WAINWRIGHT

Urquhart. Until we meet again.

They all drink.

MARY

Bloody hell, what is that?

WAINWRIGHT

Rattle Skull. Sorry, miss, a bit rough going for a lady.

MARY

(chuckles)

A Lady. Use this in my midwife work. Knock the girls right out. Who's in line after Urquhart? Are you...

They all look at her.

WAINWRIGHT

Your valley, miss. Tell us what to do. We'll follow your knickers to the ends of the earth.

MARY

Brits will know Urquhart wasn't alone, he's obviously an officer.

WAINWRIGHT

They'll come back looking.

Right on cue, sounds of horses. They wait.

MARY

There's four miles left of the trail. They go up, come back down. We sit tight, go back before dawn.

WAINWRIGHT

Alright, who's on watch with me?

MARY

I'll do it. First thing you learn as a midwife, is how to get through the night with no sleep. Don't want to fall asleep with a bunch of randy soldiers around.

WAINWRIGHT

Oh, miss, that's hard.

MARY

Turn around so I can get my dress on.

They do and she does.

MARY (CONT'D)

Can't figure you at all. You followed me and ignored your lieutenant?

WAINWRIGHT

You were a friend of Sue Pruden? She said you're the genuine article. Suppose I can tell you now - even Washington is hot to find that bastard Smith.

EXT. FIELD NEAR CAMP - DAY

Steuben is barking one to ten at soldiers.

WASHINGTON

Are they drilling the musket properly?

HAMILTON

Not quite, but thanks to Steuben they're learning a lot of German.

Soldier walks by -

SOLDIER

Ein, zwei, drei, vier... Arschloch!

More yelling in German.

Mary arrives with Wainwright.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)

Stop right there.

HAMILTON

I'll be damned. She came back. Take her to the general, let him decide.

WASHINGTON

Missus Tomkins, was it?

MARY

Yes, sir.

WASHINGTON

And Corporal...

WAINWRIGHT

Wainwright, sir.

WASHINGTON

Where's Urquhart?

WAINWRIGHT

Dead, sir. He saved us all.

WASHINGTON

Urquhart? I was about to put him in charge of the kitchen.

MARY

He led the redcoats away from us.

WASHINGTON

Damn. So who took over the platoon?

WAINWRIGHT

Well, she did, sir. Knows the whole valley, up and down.

MARY

The third hollow is flooded, fourth one is loaded with cavalry. That's where the next attack comes from.

WASHINGTON

You're sure?

MARY

Did twins up there in spring.

WASHINGTON

Jesus, you saved our necks. Can you find where the cavalry is based? Where they get their supplies?

WAINWRIGHT

You want to attack their horse,
sir? ...Sorry sir.

WASHINGTON

No, I want to steal their supplies.

MARY

I can find them. Need a man to
cover my back. Wainwright, in the
light. Show me your teeth. Take a
bath and comb your hair. Use soap
if we have any.

WAINWRIGHT

Alright, but why?

MARY

You're going to be my lover.
Kissing will be involved.

WAINWRIGHT

Jesus...I'll get out the brown coats
again. Blend right in.

MARY

No, blue. Borrow a nice hat. Bring
money. This time we get caught.

WAINWRIGHT

Caught?

EXT. FIELD NEAR CAMP - DAY

Soldiers learning drill from Von Steuben.

VON STEUBEN

I told you to bring your bayonets
today. I see half of you have them.

SOLDIER

I never got one.

SECOND SOLDIER

What's a bayonet?

THIRD SOLDIER

It's this thing, isn't it?

VON STEUBEN

Why is it rusted and scorched?

SOLDIER

I cook with it, like everyone else.

VON STEUBEN

Who told you this is for cooking?

SECOND SOLDIER

If we actually get any meat, we stick it on the end and roast it.

SOLDIER

A nice rat, a squirrel.

VON STEUBEN

No. This is not a cooking tool. The bullet is foolish but the bayonet is wise. It always knows where to go. In the next battle, a hundred of you will die, thirty will die because of the bayonet. Learn the bayonet, or you die. The British march in two ranks. One rank fires, then the other, then they come with bayonets. If you aim your musket at a man, it's accurate to fifty yards. Seventy five if you aim at a whole battle line of men. So the redcoats in front of you, they can shoot at you accurately at seventy five yards. How quickly can you run seventy five yards?

SOLDIER

The quick boys can do it in ten seconds.

VON STEUBEN

And the Tories take fifteen to load. So you close in to seventy five yards. Sometimes the redcoats panic, and fire both ranks at once, boom boom - they're all empty at the same time. When they fire, some of you fall, but the rest of you have a fifteen count before the next volley. Your muskets are loaded, but you do NOT fire. You run full speed at them, that alone will make them panic and drop their bullets. Half way across, you fire.

(MORE)

VON STEUBEN (CONT'D)

Thirty years ago in Scotland, the Scots lost their last chance to be free - they launched a charge at the English with bayonets, but they forgot to fire their guns first! Dying with a loaded gun in your hand is the stupidest way to die. Next, hit their line with bayonets. If you get in close, pull off the bayonet and use it as a knife. Who can mark off the field? Seventy five yards.

SECOND SOLDIER

Got it sir.

VON STEUBEN

At least none of you is fat.

SOLDIER

I ain't got shoes.

VON STEUBEN

Tell the general those boots better be in the next wagon! An army with no shoes is no army. Today we run downhill. Tomorrow we go up.

SOLDIER

When we get close in, take the bayonet off? Hand to hand?

VON STEUBEN

Come, attack. Let's turn to the side, so when I kill you, the others can learn a valuable lesson.

The soldier charges, his bayonet still on his musket. Von Steuben calmly pulls his bayonet off his musket, ducks and parries, swings his bayonet to the soldier's chest.

SOLDIER

I think I see your point.

VON STEUBEN

Keep your blade sharp. Don't cook with it! Don't shave with it! Don't scratch your arschloch with it! Take care of it and it will save your life! I am splitting you up. You teach the regiments. I built the company, you build the army.

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

Shots awaken the camp. A soldier is struck near Mary's tent.

SOLDIER

Bollocks. Go get Mary!

Mary emerges and crosses to a clearing where she finds the injured man. Just as she is bending over, a shot whizzes through her hair. Seven seconds later, another, and she hits the ground. Seven seconds, a shot thumps into the ground next to her. Seven seconds, and another shot barely misses her. Von Steuben approaches with his aides.

VON STEUBEN

Louis, both of you, head over there and kill those bastards!

MARY

Thank you, but -

VON STEUBEN

Stay down! It was a trick to lure you out. Two snipers with guns, they were aiming for you, Mary.

MARY

Smith is back.

Von Steuben's aides return.

LOUIS

One rode off, we got the other.

VON STEUBEN

You want hanging or shooting?

BRITISH SOLDIER

I'm a soldier, I'm not a spy!

VON STEUBEN

You're a sniper, it's practically the same. Talk to me, give me something that's worth your life. Who is the other sniper?

BRITISH SOLDIER

Smith. The smuggler.

VON STEUBEN

I don't believe it.

BRITISH SOLDIER

Trying to kill off Mary.

VON STEUBEN

Your general brought those cannon
up the river. Come now, we've
already seen them. How many cannon?

BRITISH SOLDIER

Be honest, can't count that high.
I'm a farmer.

VON STEUBEN

You're no more a farmer than I am.
Then he split his forces in two?

BRITISH SOLDIER

Regiments haven't stopped moving.

VON STEUBEN

Where did they go?

BRITISH SOLDIER

Between here and Philadelphia.

VON STEUBEN

And that bastard Smith?...Got a rope
waiting for you.

BRITISH SOLDIER

He's riding to Havertown. He claims
Mary's a spy. Fair game, Miss.

VON STEUBEN

I'll talk to Washington. He'll
decide whether we execute you.

BRITISH SOLDIER

Please!

VON STEUBEN

Put him in the stockade.

The prisoner is taken away.

MARY

Is Washington going to execute him?

VON STEUBEN

Boy is in uniform, he's not a spy.
All we can do is hold him prisoner.

MARY

You lied to him.

VON STEUBEN
Tried to kill you. Damn right I
lied.

MARY
That bugger Smith?

VON STEUBEN
We go for him tonight, before he
runs. You didn't hear any of this.

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

Washington and his officers are awake. They are angry.

WASHINGTON
Tell me you bagged him. Smith.

SOLDIER
Just missed him sir.

WASHINGTON
God damn and blast!

EXT. MAIN STREET OF SMALL PENNSYLVANIA TOWN - DAY

British garrison; Mary and Wainwright on the main street.

WAINWRIGHT
You've gone on a dozen of these
rides for Washington, the Brits
have noticed by now.

MARY
They don't know me this far north.
The British staff at the north end
of town. We go to the south end.

WAINWRIGHT
Why?

MARY
You'll see...This is perfect.

WAINWRIGHT
Why?

MARY
Let me know when the soldiers are
patrolling this end of town.

WAINWRIGHT

Here they come.

MARY

I think they noticed you.

WAINWRIGHT

It was you they noticed, Mary.
Trust me.

MARY

Okay, now! Kiss me!

WAINWRIGHT

What the -

She kisses him.

MARY

Now, run!

WAINWRIGHT

Why?

MARY

So they'll chase us!

They hide and are caught by British soldiers.

BRITISH SOLDIER

In a hurry, miss?

MARY

Please, just wanted a minute with
my man, my father would kill us
both -

BRITISH SOLDIER

Running off from your farms? Ought
to be ashamed, going at it like
rabbits in a barn. You two, come
with me. Jemmy, take the rear. Your
name isn't Mary, is it?

MARY

Alice.

They march through town, the officer in front, the soldier
behind. They observe everything.

MARY (CONT'D)

A lot of cannon for a little town.

WAINWRIGHT

Three-pound gallopers and a few six-pounders.

BRITISH SOLDIER

Belt up til we get to the Major.

Before Major Andre, in front of the local church.

BRITISH SOLDIER (CONT'D)

These two aren't from this town, they don't belong here.

ANDRE

Sneaking off for a bit of a toss in the bushes? Bloody colonists.

MARY

Seems an awful fuss for a stupid little town -

ANDRE

This is my garrison. This stupid town is the heart of the valley - we can launch cavalry raids in every direction -

BRITISH SOLDIER

Sir -

ANDRE

And every man-jack of them is loyal here. And you two -

MARY

We're just farm kin, sir.

ANDRE

You're trespassing on a military post. Fine's three shillings.

MARY

Pay the man.

ANDRE

American shillings, worthless!

WAINWRIGHT

What my boss pays me, sir!

ANDRE

I see you in this town again, you go to the prison ship! Boy, tell Smith to come back to town tonight.

Mary and Wainwright walk down the main street.

MARY

Smith. Did you hear? Oh my God -

WAINWRIGHT

They're still watching.

MARY

Now, to land the fish all the way
in the boat.

WAINWRIGHT

Sorry?

MARY

You've got to kiss me on the high
street, right in the middle.

He does.

WAINWRIGHT

You think that fooled em?

MARY

(sad)

Could be I felt like being kissed.
Now hold my hand, they're watching.

He does.

MARY (CONT'D)

Next trip, do the same in Kirkby.
First we've got to tell Washington
there's a cavalry raid coming. And
God, we have a chance at Smith.

SPY

(emerging from the trees)

Miss?

WAINWRIGHT

Who are you? Whatever your business
is, you can deal with me.

SPY

My business is with her. Miss...Tory
staff, already they're suspicious,
what you're doing.

WAINWRIGHT

Who the hell are you?

SPY

I'm doing what you're doing. Friend of Clark. But I'm more careful than you are. Go to Valley Forge and stay there, before they hang you like Sue Pruden.

MARY

Keep an eye out for that bastard Smith. Here in town.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

American unit trapped along a river, Lafayette in charge, Von Steuben observing.

LAFAYETTE

Damn, they're coming on three sides, we're trapped on the river.

VON STEUBEN

But look - they're all in a single line, it's all disorder. Shall I?

LAFAYETTE

Shall I - what are you -

VON STEUBEN

Everybody load. See that road? That's where they will stop running and start shooting.

SOLDIER

Can we take the road?

VON STEUBEN

Only if you want to be gunned down. Any farmers here, surveyors?

SOLDIER

Me. Why?

VON STEUBEN

Look at that road, draw me a line 75 yards down from it. ...Remember the bayonets. The redcoats will be here any minute, running like madmen. They get to the road, they fire, and then they will all be empty. Ready to run them down?

SOLDIER

It's nasty terrain. Chuckholes.

VON STEUBEN

Fine, go to the river and wait for them to kill you. The rest of you: follow the farmer, form up on that line. If they all fire at once, that's the signal, they're empty. Hold steady, don't panic.

Brits stop on the road and fire all at once. Some Yanks go down.

VON STEUBEN (CONT'D)

They're empty. Empty! Charge!

The Americans charge across the field. The Brits look confused. Clumsy reloading.

The Americans raise their rifles. Scream and fire.

Brits fall and begin to skitter backward.

The Americans run to the British line and go wild with the bayonets. A bit of hand to hand. Brits break and run. The Americans stop and cheer.

VON STEUBEN (CONT'D)

Can't believe it actually worked. Follow that trail - let's leave before they come back and kill us.

EXT. MAIN STREET OF ANOTHER TOWN - DAY

Mary and Wainwright.

WAINWRIGHT

We shouldn't be here. What's this, the fourth town we've done this?

MARY

Fifth. Alright, kissing time -

WAINWRIGHT

Bollocks, it's that Major! What's he doing here?

ANDRE

You're not that midwife, are you? ...And you, planting your seed in every town in the valley? Or spying for Washington. Who did you say your boss is, with the Continental money?

WAINWRIGHT
It's a farm, you see -

ANDRE
Where?

MARY
Oh, just tell him the truth.

ANDRE
Yes, be refreshing for a change.

MARY
We came to get married. My father
tried to stop us. Got a baby
coming.

ANDRE
Don't believe you. There's a simple
answer.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Mary, Wainwright, the Major, a priest; impromptu wedding.

REVEREND
Do you pledge to take her, keep her
as your lawful wife, to love and
entreat her in all things according
to the duty of a husband, forsaking
all other during her life?

WAINWRIGHT
(takes prayer book)
Here, I can read. I take you to be
my wife and my spouse and I pledge
to you the faith of my body, that I
will be faithful to you and loyal
with my body and my goods and that
I will keep you in sickness and in
health, and that I shall not
exchange you, for better or worse
until the end.

REVEREND
Say after me --

MARY
(taking the prayer book)
I pledge to you that I will take
you to be my husband and master,
etc. Here I wed you, with my body I
honor you.

REVEREND
Are you Presbyterians?

MARY
I'm sorry?

REVEREND
There's an extra line. Do you want
to promise him love, or promise him
subjection and obedience?

MARY
(with a straight face)
I promise subjection and obedience
to my husband.

REVEREND
Is there a ring?

Mary takes a cloth from her bag, ties their hands.

REVEREND (CONT'D)
What God has joined together, let
man not put asunder.

EXT. OUTSIDE CHURCH - DAY

Mary and Wainwright walk out of town.

WAINWRIGHT
So far, being married is slightly
better than being hanged as a spy.

MARY
Slightly.

WAINWRIGHT
Subjection and obedience?

MARY
It's a joke. You can tell our
children.

WAINWRIGHT
Our children -

MARY
You did promise to honor me with
your body. And now that Major
expects me to drop a baby.

WAINWRIGHT
So we're really married?

MARY

At least til the war is over.

WAINWRIGHT

Married. Not how I pictured it all in my head. What was that bit of cloth?

MARY

A bit of birthing linen, for good luck. And fertility.

WAINWRIGHT

Fertility. You realize what we just did?...Honor you with my body? Never heard it put quite like that.

MARY

For now, just honor my lips.

And he does.

MARY (CONT'D)

Come, husband. Here, take my hand.

WAINWRIGHT

Why?

MARY

They're still watching.

WAINWRIGHT

How can you tell? They're behind us.

MARY

A woman can tell. It's magic. ...I've been dying to ask you this.

WAINWRIGHT

What's that?

MARY

Since we're married. What's your name? You signed the minister's book.

WAINWRIGHT

You know. Wainwright.

MARY

Your first name.

WAINWRIGHT
Ezekiel Wainwright.

MARY
Zeke. I am married to a Zeke.

WAINWRIGHT
Wainwright's fine.

MARY
A lovely wedding, I almost cried.
Washington would have a real laugh,
if he ever laughed.

WAINWRIGHT
Someday you'll have the real thing.

MARY
That was the real thing. Minister
and all.

Wainwright takes her hand and stops them both.

WAINWRIGHT
Um, Mary?

MARY
The look on your face. No way in
the world I would hold you to it.
Man like you, you want a farm
someday, nice boring, quiet wife,
lots of babies.

WAINWRIGHT
I think I'd like a nice, boring
midwife.

MARY
You're serious. Did we really just
get married? I just buried my
husband.

WAINWRIGHT
Been stunned and gobsmacked since
the minute I met you. Mary, we care
about the same things. You're
brave, you're strong, you've
already saved my life.

MARY
I've already kissed you...a lot.

WAINWRIGHT

I've seen you pee in the woods and take a bath in the river. And I'd run through a brick wall to keep you safe, make you happy. How are we not married already?

MARY

It's insane.

WAINWRIGHT

It's likely one of us will die in the war, maybe both - disease, battle, hanging. Our lives are going to be short. Perhaps we jump ahead to the good parts. And we need to be careful.

MARY

And how in blazes do we do that? We have a dozen more missions to run.

WAINWRIGHT

Mary, we're going to have our first argument. You've been on so many of these rides, you run insane risks...

MARY

And I get the job done.

WAINWRIGHT

I care about you. A lot. That means I want to get you off that horse.

MARY

It'll never happen.

WAINWRIGHT

You're a woman. You ride the hills at night, you commit treason, you run the risk of hanging at least once a week.

MARY

Well, Washington won't let me do any more spying. Just scouting rides and a lot of nursing in camp.

WAINWRIGHT

We got lucky today. If the Tories catch you again, they'll hang you. Or take you to prison in London.

MARY

Don't get all husband-like. Only one man tells me what to do, that's Washington. I will never stop delivering babies in the valley.

She thinks.

MARY (CONT'D)

Well, Zeke, you want to marry me and stop me riding, all in the same day, there's a simple solution.

WAINWRIGHT

There is?

MARY

Put a baby in my belly. Get me off my horse for good. That's the deal.

WAINWRIGHT

Are you joking?

MARY

See the field of reed grass? Come honor my body. But first, kiss me for real.

WAINWRIGHT

Never done all that before.

MARY

I'm an old married lady. Leave it to me.

WAINWRIGHT

Hamilton was right, this spy business is right dangerous. Take one wrong step, you end up married.

EXT. STREET IN SMALL TOWN - NIGHT

Mary, on her horse, meets an innkeeper and dismounts.

MARY

Good boy!...Alright, hold your horses, tell that fishmonger his wife is going to be fine.

INNKEEPER

Erm, miss, this isn't actually for a fishmonger's wife.

Soldiers materialize out of nowhere.

MARY
Am I under arrest?

BRITISH SOLDIER
Come with us, please.

Soldiers lead her down a street to a stately home.

BRITISH SOLDIER (CONT'D)
Colonel's wife, her father is in
Parliament. She needs the best.

INT. WEALTHY HOME -- NIGHT

They walk through the home. On the ground floor, a gathering of British military officers and agents.

ANDRE
Well, they're getting information
from somewhere. It's even money
that tinker is one of them.

SECOND OFFICER
There's a midwife out there. Maybe
we should arrest them all.

Mary is now shaking like a leaf. The soldiers lead her to a bedroom with a girl in labor.

MARY
Hello, my name is...

She looks toward the soldiers, wondering whether giving a fake name will increase or decrease her danger.

MARY
Can we have the room please?

The soldier leaves.

MARY
(whispers)
My name is Mary. I'm going to get
you through this.

MOTHER
I've never had the pains like this.

MARY

No telling what you're going to get, is there? Good Lord, just in time. Big push!...Another!

A surprisingly smooth delivery and a baby cries.

MARY (CONT'D)

Hello young man. Welcome to America.

MOTHER

Thank you.

MARY

Going to put in a few stitches. This isn't your first?

MOTHER

Fourth. I think I know what I'm doing finally. Ouch!

MARY

All done. Anything else?

MOTHER

I've got servants for the rest of it. Thank you so much.

MARY

Is there a back stairway?

MOTHER

Through there.

Mary emerges out of a back door and takes a gigantic breath.

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

Mary finds the general outside his tent.

MARY

Never seen so many redcoats.

WASHINGTON

None of them recognized you?

MARY

Got lucky.

WASHINGTON

God, Mary, even your midwife work is getting dangerous.

MARY

You're not taking that away.

WASHINGTON

You found the Brits for me, you got Smith on the run, you don't owe me anything. But you know everything there is to know about my army. So you go where I allow you to go.

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

An officer runs up to the general. Mary nearby.

ANDRE

General, I'm sorry, it's my fault.

WASHINGTON

What?

ANDRE

Harlech's company, I sent them up the western valley, it's a trap.

WASHINGTON

An ambush?

ANDRE

It's too late now.

WASHINGTON

Who's our fastest man on a horse?

MARY

Did you just say fastest man?

WASHINGTON

Mary, not now -

MARY

General, in this whole state, who's the one person who needs to know every hill and valley, move like lightning day and night?

WASHINGTON

A midwife. Mary, I've got cavalry.

MARY

You got plowhorses, I could outrun them on foot. We're wasting time.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD NEAR A TOWN - NIGHT

Mary rides toward a town and attracts the attention of a platoon of soldiers, mounted.

BRITISH SOLDIER
That's her.

SECOND BRITISH SOLDIER
Staff was right.

BRITISH SOLDIER
You out here to deliver another baby, then? So who's baby?

SECOND BRITISH SOLDIER
Take you to Major Andre.

Mary wheels her horse and flees.

SOLDIER
We can trap her against the river.
Cover the other road.

The soldiers take both roads, forcing Mary up a tree-covered hillside. She and the horse hide below the summit.

MARY
Oh no no no no. Old friend, I have to say goodbye. I have to make a swim for it. At least when the Brits catch you, they'll feed you. If I had a penny for every time you saved my neck.

Crying, she hugs the horse's neck.

MARY
Goodbye.

She scurries down the hill, removes her coat and skirt, and jumps into the river.

EXT. CAMP - DAY

Walker and Von Steuben wash their clothes.

WALKER
Why on earth do you stay in this hellhole? You're not even American.

VON STEUBEN

Look at this boy. Skinny as a rail, dysentery, frostbite, he can barely walk. We have a thousand boys like him.

WALKER

We?

VON STEUBEN

Us. If these terrible things happened to a European army, the army would collapse and the men would blow away like leaves.

WALKER

Or kill their generals.

VON STEUBEN

There is no army anywhere who endures what they do. They can barely stand, they don't want to go home to their wives. They want nothing more than to fight the greatest army in the world. They're insane.

WALKER

They're Americans. Or is that the same thing?

VON STEUBEN

They'd rather die of the flux than bend the knee to that fat king. Can you imagine what will happen when these boys are all on their feet? When they have bread and shoes? When they know how to fight? Would you want to fight them?

WALKER

So you really are an American.

VON STEUBEN

They are almost seeking death. And for what? A dream. This foolishness with a new Roman Senate and judges and letting people vote on who their king will be?

He smiles.

VON STEUBEN (CONT'D)

This country is all farmers, where will these magical Ciceros and Catos come from? Have you seen their Congress? The same imbeciles who can't get bread and blankets to these boys think they can change the history of the world.

WALKER

Democracy.

VON STEUBEN

Dreamers. I just love these boys.

Elsewhere, Washington greets an elderly recruit.

LUDWIG

I am Ludwig. I was in the Prussian army. Now I'm a baker in the city. Try that. Gingerbread cookie. I want to enlist.

WASHINGTON

How old are you?

LUDWIG

And I want to donate my money, and bake bread for your troops.

WASHINGTON

Bread! Congratulations! Welcome to the Continental Army.

He sees a still-frustrated Greene.

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)

Greene, sign him up, let's feed these boys...Yes, I know, I'm going to get you into battle.

Greene greets a supplier named MEADE.

GREENE

Mister Meade? Congress appointed you Clothier General of the army?

MEADE

Yes sir. Working like blazes to make your shirts and coats.

GREENE

You must be so proud. We got your shipment for Wallace's regiment.

MEADE

It rushed it for you special, sir.

GREENE

Have you seen the British in the field?

MEADE

God, no. I'm a civilian.

GREENE

Did it occur to you that we might have problems if I put Wallace's regiment onto the battlefield in red coats?

He opens a sack and pulls out a red jacket.

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

Washington, his spies, and Hamilton.

WASHINGTON

Hamilton, we're rounding up some of our agents in my tent tonight.

HAMILTON

So our spies are going to meet each other? Isn't that a bit dangerous?

WASHINGTON

I'd like you to meet Mary Tomkins. Midwife in the valley.

CLARK

I know who she is.

WASHINGTON

And her partner Wainwright. This is - call him Peddler Clark. Clark, you need to stop the smuggling for now - too risky to run agents and smuggle guns on the same trip.

CLARK

One more run tonight, sir.

WASHINGTON

Damn right. ...This is Jack Honeyman.

MARY

I know you! He's a Brit! Works for the Tory army, out of that butcher's shop!

WASHINGTON

She paid you the ultimate compliment. Jack works for us, not them. He ran a brilliant deception against the Hessian camp, we hit them with a raid, they were asleep. So he's proved whose side he's on.

MARY

Jesus. They're going to hang you!

HONEYMAN

You're worried about me? What a laugh. Miss, I have word of you all through Jersey. The Tories are onto you, and your man Wainwright here. Next job you do, they're going to hang you.

WASHINGTON

That's one reason why we're here. Clark, Jack, you need to recruit more agents, get out of the field, too dangerous. ...Mary, I'm sorry...

MARY

No more missions?

WASHINGTON

You can go back to nursing the wounded.

MARY

You said I can scout with your patrols.

WASHINGTON

Jesus. Fine, scouting, large units only. We're building an empty camp down the river, make them think our army is twice the size it really is. It will work, as long as they don't actually attack it.

Lafayette enters with JAMES ARMISTEAD, a slave.

LAFAYETTE

Jemmy just got here. You want to tell the others? Dangerous.

WASHINGTON

Either we trust our spies or we don't. And they need to know who he is, in case he is betrayed, because he's a double agent. Everyone, meet James Armistead. He's been hired to work for the British general staff. As a British spy.

MARY

You mean...

WASHINGTON

Yes, he's a gold mine.

ARMISTEAD

I've been feeding them false information - they think your army is the size of an Oriental horde. That's why they're not attacking. And after the war, you're going to set me free. Isn't that right?

WASHINGTON

Clark and Honeyman are going on their last ride together. Tonight. You know who they're after?

MARY

(smiles)

Oh God. Smith.

EXT. OUTSIDE WEALTHY HOME - DAY

Major Andre meets a mother named LYDIA at her door.

ANDRE

Madam, I'm here to requisition your house. You need to leave.

LYDIA

For how long?

ANDRE

Indefinitely.

LYDIA

I have children, I have no place to go!

ANDRE

You have a big main hall?

LYDIA
Yes, sir. Please -

ANDRE
You can stay, if we can use your
hall for the general's strategy
meetings.

A blank look comes over her face. She blinks.

LYDIA
I'm at the King's service, sir.

INT. WEALTHY HOME - DAY

Andre examines intelligence reports with other officers.

ANDRE
Bring the map, the family is gone.

OFFICER
Alright, look over here by this
river. Can you read that?

ANDRE
The Wissahickon.

OFFICER
You're joking.

ANDRE
White Marsh. We can hit Washington
there, his defenses are a disgrace.
It will be a total surprise.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Andre and the Brits arrive at Washington's line only to find
a sophisticated defense there, logs, carts, cannon, and
Molly.

MOLLY
Reload, move your asses! Battle
ain't over yet!

On the English line.

ANDRE
What in blazes - how did they get
all that up so quickly?

OFFICER
We can withdraw, sir.

ANDRE
Not bloody likely. Bunch of
scarecrows, charge em and they'll
fall apart.

OFFICER
You mean a frontal assault, sir?

ANDRE
What are you worried about? Be over
in a few minutes, might even pick
up a few cannon. Captains, charge!

The Brits attack and are thrown back.

OFFICER
Seems they learned a thing or two -

ANDRE
Yes, let's have a conversation
right in the middle of - form a
line for God's sake! Get round and
flank them!

A flanking attack, also thrown back. The British general,
Howe, arrives.

HOWE
What in blazes happened?

ANDRE
They were waiting for us, General.
Washington built up his defenses.

HOWE
We were inches away from ending the
war, right here.

INT. WEALTHY HOME - DAY

Andre interrogates Lydia upstairs.

ANDRE
And where were you last night?

LYDIA
Asleep. I promise. Something wrong?

Frustrated, he proceeds downstairs and finds Howe.

HOWE

Alright, Andre, what happened?

ANDRE

The family, they know nothing. But look at that field. Washington knew we were coming and laid up a defense. The walls must have ears.

In a cupboard Lydia's young son is listening.

EXT. CAMP - DAY

Washington confers with Von Steuben.

WASHINGTON

You made me an army.

VON STEUBEN

Nonsense. That terrible winter, the men know fighting the British could never be as bad as that. It was that valley that made the army. That and one other thing.

WASHINGTON

And the second?

VON STEUBEN

You, sir. You stayed with them, ate the same shit, shivered in the same tents. Any other general, you'd have a mutiny, you'd be dead.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD NEAR A TOWN - NIGHT

Smith exits a tavern and heads down the lane outside. He sees a pursuer standing in the street and runs the other way, only to find another pursuer behind him. Two more pursuers close in from the sides. They draw pistols and relieve him of his weapons.

SOLDIER

Evening, Master Smith. Hope you had a nice piece of meat and a drink, cause you're going to the General.

INT. WASHINGTON'S TENT - NIGHT

Washington is meeting with his spies when Hamilton arrives with Smith and another British prisoner, guarded by two soldiers.

HAMILTON

Sir, we got him.

WASHINGTON

Got who?

HAMILTON

The spy. Smith. Sent two of ours to the gallows.

WASHINGTON

You're sure?

HAMILTON

He had a map of the camp.

BRITISH PRISONER

Sir, I'm English, even I know he's guilty.

WASHINGTON

Anything to say?

SMITH

No. ...I will say. It's shocking, how you've held this mob together all winter. Don't know how you did it.

WASHINGTON

Thank you. Well, it's your choice. Hanging or shooting.

SMITH

Seen your men drilling. You have six men who can shoot straight? I don't want to be butchered.

VON STEUBEN

I can shoot the hairs off your head one by one. Me and my boys. Send you off quick.

INT. VON STEUBEN'S TENT - NIGHT

Von Steuben awakens his aides.

VON STEUBEN
Louis, Pierre?

LOUIS
Monsieur?

VON STEUBEN
Wake up. Meet me by the creek. Full
uniform. Not a hair out of place.
Muskets loaded.

EXT. IN THE WOODS BY A CREEK - NIGHT

The sun rises. Von Steuben and his men meet at the creek. The spy is tied to a tree. With a needle, Von Steuben puts a tiny white button over his heart.

VON STEUBEN
Hold still while we prepare.

He goes to his aides. Mary emerges from the trees.

SMITH
So we're square now?

MARY
Will be in a few minutes.

SMITH
Sue Pruden was a good old soul. You know she adored you. British units have orders to capture you and hang you. They know what you're doing.

MARY
Thank you for the warning, but why on earth are you telling me?

SMITH
I haven't the faintest idea. I love my country, you know. Do you love your country?

MARY
Yes, I do. Here, hold still.

She ties his blindfold. And touches his face.

VON STEUBEN
(whispers to his aides)
Right through the button, where the heart meets the blood vessel.
(MORE)

VON STEUBEN (CONT'D)

You must be perfect. You are loaded
up to sept?

LOUIS

Oui, monsieur.

VON STEUBEN

(whispers)

Rammers returned?

They stand at attention. He stands with him.

VON STEUBEN (CONT'D)

(whispers)

Huit. Neuf. Dix.

All three fire as one. Von Steuben unties the spy using his
bayonet, and checks his pulse.

VON STEUBEN (CONT'D)

Reposez armes...Rompez les rangs.

Louis shaken. Von Steuben touches his shoulder.

VON STEUBEN (CONT'D)

Remember Ecclesiastes. Whatsoever
work your hand finds to do, do it
with all your strength and all your
skill. Even in this. Because there
is no work, nor knowledge, nor
wisdom, when you're in the grave.
You did well.

He sees Mary.

VON STEUBEN (CONT'D)

English, right? You know that boy?

MARY

He was a friend. Once.

VON STEUBEN

I'll walk you back.

Wainwright meets them.

WAINWRIGHT

You alright?

She hugs him tight.

EXT. CAMP - DAY

Cheering soldiers in a line. Long live France! Wainwright find, Mary, Lafayette, Von Steuben and Greene in front of Washington's tent.

MARY

What's going on?

WAINWRIGHT

France has come into the war.

MARY

On whose side - on our side?

WAINWRIGHT

Spain and the Dutch may come in. Howe resigned. New man is Clinton, he's leaving for New York, he thinks the French will hit there.

MARY

So the British will be out in the open field. Where we can hit them.

GREENE

You've got the celebration ready?

VON STEUBEN

You wanted me to set up a salute, to celebrate the French? You do know I'm a German, yes? ...The French.

LAFAYETTE

(smiles)

It's killing you, isn't it?

VON STEUBEN

Oh, fine, I'll give the order. I'll even do it in French. Feu de joie!

A unit executes a maneuver wherein muskets fire down the line in rapid succession. Cheers.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD HEADING TOWARD MONMOUTH - DAY

Wainwright and Mary have a tense moment as the army prepares for battle.

WAINWRIGHT

Tell me you're going to stay off the battlefield.

She folds her arms and looks at him, determined.

WAINWRIGHT (CONT'D)

Jesus, Mary. All these plans you have, none of it matters unless we both live. What are the odds?

MARY

(undoes a chain round her neck)
Take my good luck charm.

WAINWRIGHT

What about you?

MARY

What's the point of anything, if I'm lucky and you're dead?...Let's go together then? We go down, we go down together.

Washington with Hamilton and his troops.

WASHINGTON

Clinton is marching to New York, we need to make him pay in blood for every mile. Mary, one last ride. Can you take a team out, rip up roads, burn bridges?

MARY

Love to.

WASHINGTON

Mary! Don't let them take you alive.

MARY

Why? Is being shot better than being hanged by a rope?

WASHINGTON

Just come home, alright? Take my horse.

She gallops off.

HAMILTON

You do know Mary's pregnant, right?

WASHINGTON

She's - what? God damn and blast --

EXT. FURTHER UP THE ROAD - DAY

Mary's team gallops away from a burning bridge.

MARY

Thank God for wooden bridges.

Wainwright chops a tree which falls on the road.

MARY (CONT'D)

If the Brits come, don't let yourself be caught with me. Just run.

WAINWRIGHT

What do you mean, get captured with you? You want me to leave you behind?

MARY

If you're with me, and the Brits capture you - I can't explain. Just run.

British troops appear, and lacking a bridge, begin wading across the river. Mary and Wainwright look at each other, and then Wainwright takes Mary's hand. They flee into the woods; Wainwright throws Mary to the ground inside a thicket of bushes and throws himself on top of her. British troops march past but miss the thicket.

MARY (CONT'D)

It's me they want to hang, not you. You knew?

WAINWRIGHT

Of course I knew. Brits want to hang you, they got to get through me.

She kisses him and holds him tight.

WAINWRIGHT (CONT'D)

If you don't tell Washington, I will.

EXT. MONMOUTH ROAD - DAY

Washington with his troops including a General LEE.

LEE

This means hitting the full British force in the open.

WASHINGTON

Either we can beat the enemy or we can't. Let's find out.

LEE

It's a hundred degrees out here. Sir, the men aren't ready, we don't have the strength to attack.

WASHINGTON

Have them take their coats off - I don't care if they fight naked, as long as their guns are loaded. So you don't like the plan?

LEE

Sorry, sir, no.

WASHINGTON

Lafayette? You think you can lead an American force on this field -

LEE

Sir! A Frenchman??

WASHINGTON

Your point?

LEE

Respectfully request the command.

WASHINGTON

To lead the attack?

LEE

Yes, sir.

WASHINGTON

We've all got to attack at once.

He turns to a boy.

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)

Okay, you do this, you get double rations and no work for a month.

BOY

Two rats a day instead of one.

WASHINGTON

You're the only one small enough to get up that tree. On the ridge.

BOY
It's easy sir.

WASHINGTON
But if they see you, they'll hang
you. Still want to go?

BOY
Back in an hour sir.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

The boy climbs the tree. The Brits fire at him, but they
don't really have their hearts in it.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

The boy reporting back.

BOY
Sir, they have enough men to kill
us all three or four times over.

WASHINGTON
Just means more redcoats to kill.

BOY
Too small for a musket sir.

WASHINGTON
Go help the artillery boys, then.
Just don't tell your mother.

EXT. THE MONMOUTH BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Walker watches as Lee tries to organize his attack.

WALKER
Sir, I'm not sure the regiments
understood all those orders.

LEE
Are you questioning my orders now?
We're engaging any minute!

WALKER
Are we, sir? Washington wants the
whole attack coordinated.

The Americans, alas, attack piecemeal. First the Americans
attack the left flank.

Cornwallis, the British commander, is behind a makeshift defensive line.

CORNWALLIS

Ready. Fire.

And the Brits fire. The Americans withdraw and then new American units attack right.

CORNWALLIS (CONT'D)

Prime and load. Fire.

Brits fire.

And then an American attack from the center.

CORNWALLIS (CONT'D)

Prime and load. Fire.

Brits fire.

CORNWALLIS (CONT'D)

And charge!

The Brits run the Yanks them off the field. Some Americans are shot or bayoneted. American soldiers stream toward Washington, led by Lee.

WASHINGTON

Everybody stop!...Lee, how do I put this? Go to the rear with the cannon. Colonels, form up on me. Pull this thundering herd together and form up between the two rivers. Make a line, for God's sake.

Brits hit the American left with cavalry.

WALKER

Here they come, on the left! Like we practiced it!

Americans move brilliantly, kneel with bayonets and repel the British horse.

Greene gallops up to Washington.

WASHINGTON

Move, move! What do you see?

GREENE

The Brits hit the left, they're coming after me next, on the right.

WASHINGTON

I promised you, didn't I? You don't have time to move the heavy guns. Get your three-pounders around their end and hammer them.

On the flank.

GREENE

Molly, the ball is about to begin.

MOLLY

Alright, lads. They're coming after us. Load her up.

The boy from the tree scene helps with her horses. Brits do hit the right; Greene's artillery swings around their end, moving precisely, and blasts them. The Brits pull back, leaving their wounded. Exhausted, the Brits pull off their coats and lean heavily on their guns.

WASHINGTON

And now what?

GREENE

They hit the left, they hit the right...now for the center.

WASHINGTON

Right. Wayne's out there, way ahead of the line -

GREENE

He's got hedges for cover -

WASHINGTON

His horses are exhausted. He can't move, they're going to flank him out. Nothing we can do about it. Can you cover him while he retreats to the main line?

GREENE

Jesus, I better run.

WASHINGTON

Take my horse. But bring him back!

The Brits chase Wayne out of his forward tree line; Greene fires and covers the retreat.

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)

We're so close to winning this. The one most important thing -

GREENE

Steal a march on them at night?

WASHINGTON

The men are dropping from heat stroke. Both armies are sleeping on their guns, we can smell the enemy's breath. The army that gets water tonight wins. Find a few men who can still stand, get out with water buckets, make sure the men are ready to fight tomorrow.

MARY

I've got it, sir.

WASHINGTON

Mary, it's too dangerous -

MARY

Greene, twenty men, twenty buckets, meet me at the creek.

WASHINGTON

When the English wake up, they still have enough to kill us all. What the hell am I going to do?

Mary on the battlefield, fetching drinking water, finds a man with a broken leg.

MARY

Sweets, give me a hand, we need to get him off the field now.

WAINWRIGHT

What about that one? British lad, heat stroke.

She looks at him and shakes his head.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - NIGHT

Lafayette enters Von Steuben's tent.

LAFAYETTE

Wake up, Von Stupid, we have a job.

VON STEUBEN

Verdammt.

LAFAYETTE

Round up fifty good men.

VON STEUBEN

If anyone's awake.

Lafayette, Von Steuben and an armed platoon watch the British supply train from a ridge.

LAFAYETTE

The English are running away.
That's their supply train. Enough
food for all of Europe.

VON STEUBEN

A good man will die to defend his
country. You think those boys will
die to defend turnips and cabbage?

He leads a noisy charge which frightens off the Brits.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Mary tends to the wounded while Washington and his officers watch.

HAMILTON

General, it's a miracle. The Brits
ran away in the night.

WASHINGTON

They were heading north to New York
anyway. Jesus, what a mess.

HAMILTON

A mess? We fought the Brits to a
draw. Long battle, hot day, they
came at us three times, we stopped
them. Could we have done that a
year ago? We're an army now. We
march to the city with our heads
held high, get stinking drunk, say
hello to the ladies, Congress will
vote to make you king. In a month
we're New York hunting the British.

GREENE

Wine, women and song. But first, a
long, hot bath. Smile, General. The
field is ours. That's how you know
you won.

Meade arrives with soldiers carrying crates.

MEADE

General, got the uniforms!

HAMILTON

Uniforms? They're all different colors!

WASHINGTON

Don't care if they match! Look in the crate, boots, shirts, the lot!

MARY

What's this on the button? U.S.?

WASHINGTON

United States. Your new country.

MARY

No, I think it means "us".

WASHINGTON

United States.

MARY

U.S. Us. Hey, boys. Here's to us.

SOLDIERS

(smiling)

Here's to us.

WASHINGTON

I've never really won a battle before, is this what it looks like?

Von Steuben and Lafayette approach with sacks.

LAFAYETTE

I'll tell you want winning looks like. We raided their supply train. Got shoes, shirts, blankets, potatoes, sausages...

WASHINGTON

Boys, victory is ours. The victory is yours. Dammit, let's eat!

Thunderous cheers. Magnificent, sloppy feast.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Washington, Wainwright and other soldiers ride up to Mary with an extra horse.

WASHINGTON

Mary?

MARY

General!

WASHINGTON

Need you to come for a ride. Borrow one of the cavalry horses you love so much.

MARY

Long as we're not in a hurry..

WASHINGTON

We're attending a birth.

MARY

So we ARE in a hurry. I'll get my bag. Why on earth are you coming?

WASHINGTON

Relax, you're not delivering the baby.

MARY

I don't understand -

WASHINGTON

Hop up, let's go for a ride.

Mary sees her husband's grave, the ribbon faded but still tied to the sapling. She dismounts and Wainwright does also.

WAINWRIGHT

Can you do this by yourself now?

MARY

Yes, but come hold my hand anyway.

They go to the sapling and she kneels. Washington watches them but can't hear what they say.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Continuation. They arrive at a farm, where a mare is giving birth to a colt. Right from the off, the colt is clearly a bolt of lightning, bounding all over the field, born for speed. Mary is stunned.

WASHINGTON

We're too late.

FARMER'S WIFE

Born early this morning. You're that spy, Brits want to hang you.

WASHINGTON

I told you, Mary.

MARY

Jesus, be careful! Looks like he wants to jump over the moon.

WASHINGTON

His father was a racehorse. It was my fault the Brits captured your horse, so...

MARY

Jesus, he's mine, then?

WASHINGTON

Can you train him?

MARY

Let's see if I can get close.

She hops over the fence. The colt, curious, hops over to her. The mare watches.

MARY (CONT'D)

Not afraid of anything, are you?
You and I. We're going to fly.

FADE OUT.

THE END.