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**Chapter I**

**Lexington, Massachusetts, April 18, 1775**

William Brady tore down the lanes of Lexington, a small town in the Massachusetts countryside, in his freedom suit, so elated he could have exploded. He neared his family’s humble farm, rehearsing his announcement, stumbling over the white geese, which were honking aggressively. “I’ve a job at John’s Forge. I’m a …”.

His mother was stirring a pot, which smelled like the usual leek and potato broth, which the family sat down to every day. Well actually it was only William and his mother, Mary. His father, Ned, was an alcoholic and had gambled away what little the family had earned in last year’s harvest. He was probably drowning his sorrows in his favourite pub, Buckman’s Tavern. William’s older brother had died of consumption when he was just 10.

“So when do you start?” Mary had been grudging of his job at the forge, as she’d always disapproved of the blacksmith. She never said why. “ Why aren’t you pleased? Do you want another bloody cock-up like Pa? Do you want me to be so poor I can’t fill my belly when I go to sleep? William spat. “This family is falling apart. I can fix that.” He slammed his fist on the table and stormed out of the room.

William had trouble getting to sleep that night. He had a sense that tonight was no ordinary night. Even Barnaby the young stallion was agitated, running from side to side in the stable. His father still wasn’t back from the tavern. Only his mother was having a sound night.

Suddenly, in what felt like the middle of the night, a man on horseback came galloping past the house shouting, “The regulars are coming!” That could only mean one thing - the British were on their way.

William felt immediately scared. He hadn’t really ever thought that the British were such a threat. He knew that things had been tense since the taxation and there had been violence in Boston, but not this. He knew that John had been making firearms, after all he’d made plenty of flintlocks himself, but he hadn’t thought it would be so soon. Not here in quiet Lexington.

There was a cascade of bells, a pounding of drums and a roar of gunshots. Without a word to his mother, he fled to the green to try and find his drunken father. In a frenzy, he headed straight for the tavern, where it became apparent that half the village was up, fully clothed and armed including, to his dismay, his father. “Pa, what are you doing? What’s going on?” he screeched.

“Go back to bed son, this isn’t your war. Look after your mother!” he commanded. “No, I want to fight as well. It’s my country and I’m a man now!”

**Chapter 2**

**Lexington Green, April 19, 1775, Sunrise**

A drum started beat to a rhythm. “That’s the beat to arms, we need to go to the captain” said his father.

There had much speculation about where and when the English were coming from. A messenger had come about 20 minutes ago saying that they were not on land so they must be coming by ship. However, more recently, someone had come saying that they were within half a mile. Ned threw a musket to William and they ran out onto the green.

There were ordinary people in ordinary clothes outside, carrying anything from flintlocks, to axes, to knives. They must have been the militia. William and his father went over to the captain, as did most people. He was already giving orders. “Every man of you, who is equipped, follow me.” Just then, out of the cold morning fog, the Redcoats appeared. “Lay down your arms, you damned rebels, or you are all dead men.” The leader on horseback threatened. No one backed out. “Fire!” he screeched, and the Redcoats’ first platoon obeyed. Nobody was hurt or killed, so they couldn’t have had bullets in them.

“Every man for himself!” the captain shouted at the top of his voice. People charged over the walls, but William and his father lay down, shielded by a fence. Just then, another shot was fired from the British, felling a few of the militia. William noticed a boy of about 15 sobbing beside his dead father. “ Bastards! All of you! Bastards!” he yelled, before he was shot in the head by one of the kings’ men.

People were retreating now. There were shots coming from the distance, from the villagers this time. It was at this time that Ned ran out, and William could hear shots, then replies. He cautiously lifted his head over the fence. His father was clutching his arm in agony. William ran out. He was so close he could see the approaching soldier’s eyes. He grabbed his father’s good arm and dragged him to safety. The Redcoats had seen where he had gone.

He needed to move fast. His father was moaning non-stop. He would surely give the game away if they were to hide. “Get up on your feet!” he instructed. His father obeyed, with certain irritation, at the lack of sympathy he was getting. William looked around. There was a well. Too risky, they could drown. There were the roofs. What, with his father in that state? The cellar. He un-holstered his flintlock and shot the lock. Perfect. It had barely grazed the wood, but had severed the bolt in two. They went down closing the door behind them. It was pitch black, and smelt of mould. If the Redcoats looked close enough, they’d be found out. William could hear them now.

Now it was Ned’s turn to command. He pushed a barrel of rum over with difficulty and pushed the wall behind it. To William’s disbelief, it opened to reveal another room, well lit and less draughty. He instructed William to go inside whilst he carefully replaced the barrel and closed the door behind him.

They stayed silent until they were sure the British were gone. William had given his father his coat, which he tied around his arm as a tourniquet to stem the blood flow that was pouring out of his wound. It was a nasty mess. Ned’s arm was gnarled, distorted. The bone was splintered, and the flesh was raw. There was the smell of blood in the air.

Ned looked increasingly in pain, and William eventually decided that they needed to get some attention. They crept up the cellar stairs and cautiously looked into the bar. People were rushing about, getting food and bed sheets. Noticing the state of his father’s arm, the village physician rushed over to him and said “Follow me outside, this needs seeing to”. They had to amputate it. There was no way that was going to heal, the doctor had stated, and promptly got out a saw.

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**Chapter 3**

William was back working in a couple of days. But he didn’t mind. Now he had an initiative. Making flintlocks no longer felt tedious. He was happy to spend another hour making ammunition, as it was all for the cause. They had to work together, stick together, like brothers.

He went home to a warmer house. His father was not at the pub, and the fire was roaring. Mary, though, wasn’t too happy that William had fought without even bothering to wake her up. But she’d accepted his motives and life was slowly returning to normal. William found out that Ned hadn’t actually been going to the brewery for drinks, but to plan the battle and donate funds to the cause. This filled William with respect and pride that he’d been wrong about his father.

William was off to work one morning when, hearing the sound of drums and people chanting, he went to investigate. The noise was coming from the green, William was certain. He arrived just in time to hear the man start his speech.

“Join up for your country, join up for liberty, join, or die”, somebody bellowed at the head of a procession of roughly clothed men and women. A stout man with bristles coming out of his nostrils, he held the last words with a certain slyness, revelling at the captivating effect it was having on his audience. There were children running at his side, feeling important, like everyone was looking admiringly at them. “Down with the King! Let him beg at our feet as we mercilessly crush his pathetic excuse of an army! Forward, in the name of liberty!” “LONG LIVE AMERICA!” the crowd chorused.

The crowd started to die down and people dispersed. William continued on his way to work.

There were posters everywhere. “Join or Die” with a snake in thirteen pieces, to symbolise the thirteen states. There was now a recruiting desk in the meetinghouse. William noticed one of his friends from chapel in the queue. He was the one that used to get picked on because of the shape of his nose. He was going to leave when the stout major boomed, “Over here boy!” He obeyed. “Sergeant!” A rather contrasting sergeant, a small wiry man with a neatly trimmed moustache appeared from behind the door. “ You’ve got a new soldier!” The sergeant eyed him from eye to toe and then back up again

“Has he signed the papers?” he asked timidly. The major shook his head before walking away. He reappeared with a book with a lot of signatures on it. “ Just sign here, here and here.”

William didn’t really think what about what he was getting in to. He signed the paper in his neatest writing, but still managed to flick ink whilst when forming the ‘a’. “And here’s your five shillings, and a note for your land after the war. You are an official congress 32nd regiment Private” He handed the currency over. “We sail on Friday”.

Outside, there was a big commotion. People swore and jeered as the rebels tore down a statue of King George III holding the sovereign’s orb in his left hand. There was a clunk, and the metal replica toppled over, into a sea of people. The women were spitting vulgarly on the statue wearing a striped sash around their neck. William decided it would be best to go home.

**Chapter 4**

Ned and Mary hadn’t taken kindly to the news. William’s father argued that it wasn’t his war, he was too young, and there would be no one to look after his mother. All were valid points. His mother just gave him the silent treatment, and wouldn’t speak to him as she served up the meal. She wouldn’t speak to him in the morning either. It was like he wasn’t there.

It was the second morning after he’d signed up that his mother finally talked to him. “It’s your choice” she said softly “But if you do go, you’ll never come home.” She walked out of the room and William left to go to work. His mind was set.

Friday was approaching and William was busy at the forge, making flintlock muskets. It was tiring work. Once one had been finished you had to make another, until your hands gave up on you. He had already decided that he would go. He wanted to do more than be neutral; he wanted to be in the midst of battle.

It was Friday. William had told his parents that John wanted him to work overtime, to keep up with the commission of Congress. This was only partly a lie. There was a lot to do at the moment. They had just received an order for two cannons, which had to be made to a high standard and to a strict deadline.

William was sad not to be there to help them finish it but he had even bigger needs. He slid into the blackness.

It was a ten-mile walk to the Charles River. He made his way to the queue of boats at the harbour. There was a huge crowd, waving off their loved ones. They wore red and white sashes, and were shouting obscenities about the British. William saw his sergeant, with a musket slung around his back, and a flintlock pistol in his holster, and went over. “Brady!” he shouted at William. “ Over here! Get aboard!” he yelled, gesturing towards a nearly full flat-bottomed boat. William hopped on and sat down.

“Hello” the man sat beside him said. “The name’s Charles Goodwin, but you can call me Charlie.” William smiled and told him his name. It was good to have someone to talk to because it was an uncomfortable journey. Charlie was a farmer, like William, but he sold mostly crops and so didn’t have much space for animals. He had a dog, called George, and collected eggs from the coops. His Father was a widower; his mother had died in labour, so he didn’t know her. He said it was better that way. Getting attached was a bad thing, he claimed, because good things always come to an end. He also told William about something called “The Declaration Of Independence”[[1]](#footnote-1), which was basically a cry for freedom. He seemed to have a lot in common, so William listened intently to every word. They arrived deep into the night.

**Chapter 5**

**June 17, 1775 – Breed’s Hill, Boston**

They had to dig deep ditches for the battle before the first light. It was backbreaking. “Come on lads! These bunkers are to be your saviour for the battle. The deeper you dig, the safer you’ll be.” The sergeant encouraged. He was a kind man, out of place in this Armageddon-like battle. William was in the same hole as Charlie; who was looking dreadful. His eyes were watering and he kept stumbling. William told him that he didn’t need to do it, as he was all right alone. But Charlie was stubborn. He said that he’d sooner die of exhaustion, than be shot in a ditch that only reached up to his knees.

They’d built up quite a trench by the time the first rays appeared over the hill. Suddenly someone shouted, “Gage and his army are here!” Sure enough, a huge mass of flat-bottomed rowing boats came into view. People were scurrying about, making sure they had everything. William remembered that he hadn’t eaten since they left and was beginning to feel a little peckish. “Got any eats?”[[2]](#footnote-2) He asked Charlie. Charlie nodded and chucked a piece of bread, which looked like it had been attacked by a dog. However, William ate gratefully.

Then it started. There were cannonballs flying everywhere. It was like a food fight; if the opposition fired, everyone would duck for cover, and wait for them to need to reload, before coming out of shelter and pelting their ammunition at the enemy.

The loyalists were on the shore now. They advanced up the hill. This was it. This was what he’d wanted to do wasn’t it? He raised his musket and lined up his shot. It was abysmal. It skewered wide, going closer to his comrades, than the enemy. Charlie was having better luck. His first shot buried into the arm of a redcoat and blood spurted out, streaking down his shirt. The second narrowly missed an officer’s head and the third found its way through a man’s chest. William was getting more accurate now. His best shot sank itself into a soldier’s leg, and he fell to ground, maimed. He didn’t get the pleasure that he thought he’d get out of it. Instead, a grim guilt spread through him. They were humans as well. They had families. They had livelihoods. But yet they were fighting savagely against one another. Still, now it was a fight for survival, and William didn’t much like the idea of being shot. Suddenly something clicked inside his mind for no apparent reason.

He felt like he’d never done before. He was wild, like an animal, delighting in every kill he got. The loyalists had already pushed the British back twice. They were preparing for their biggest assault. William could sense it would be their last, what he didn’t know is whether it’d be successful or not.

He didn’t feel a thing. One minute, he was looking down his barrel, and the next he was sprawled face up on the floor. He could see Charlie screaming beside him. That was when the pain set in, it seared through his brain, like a forest fire and into his chest. He smiled. Then it went black.

---------------------------------------------- The End -----------------------------------------

**Epilogue**

William was just one of the 500 rebels to die or be wounded in the battle of Bunker Hill (Which was planned to be fought there, but the rebel leader, Israel Putnam mistakenly seized Breed’s Hill.) But, over 1000 redcoat casualties were recorded. The British went on to win, but were forced to evacuate on 17th March. The Americans won The War Of Independence officially on 3rd September 1783, but the final battle was won on 19th October 1781.

It is estimated that around 25,000 American troops died in the war, compared to the 10,000 British soldiers. The Promised Land was not given, and the pay was divided.

**Sources:**

* Dorling Kindersley Eyewitness - American Revolution 2005
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* Lincoln <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0443272/>
* The American Revolution <http://theamericanrevolution.org/>
* History <http://www.history.com/topics/battles-of-lexington-and-concord/videos#first-revolutionary-battle-at-lexington--concord>

1. The Declaration Of Independence was signed on the 4th July 1776. It was basically a letter about why they were fighting to the British government. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. ‘Eats’ was American slang for food. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)