

AMERICAN REBEL

by

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PARADIGM / MADHOUSE

The following is based on a true story.

THICK SMOKE.

Clouds of it, swirling and twisting as it rises, drifting in the wind.

And then THUNDER.

The earth shaking beneath our feet. Cannon shots. Staccato GUNFIRE.

Followed by screams. Death rattles. Battle cries. The sounds of men piercing the sky.

OPEN ON:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD -- NORTH CAROLINA -- AFTERNOON

Red-coated British on one side, blue-coated Continentals across from them, a haze of smoke and fire rising between armies.

SUPER: Greensboro, North Carolina -- March 15th, 1781.

The British have the high ground, they outnumber the Continentals two-to-one, and they're winning.

They pummel their enemy with heavy artillery. Followed by musket volleys. More smoke rising as we go across the field and behind--

THE CONTINENTAL LINES.

Where there's a hastily built and very shallow trench, dead bodies scattered between the feet of troops still alive and fighting.

And in the mass of men, we find the scared eyes of a young soldier holding a musket and seeing his first real action of the war, this is:

WILLIAM JAFFERS (20s): blue eyes hidden behind a layer of dirt, breathing heavily, bare-knuckling his rifle, as he raises it and fires into the distance along with the rest of the men.

... BANG!!!

There's screams from the British, then he quickly ducks as musket balls *whizz, whizz, whizz* past his head; soldiers all around him are hit, bullets thumping into flesh, bodies falling to mud.

CAPTAIN WEBB (O.S.)
SECOND VOLLEY, READY!!

William glances into the distance at CAPTAIN JAMES WEBB (42); regiment commander, sword held high in the sky, through the billowing smoke.

CAPTAIN WEBB

AIM!!

Then William drops his musket and grabs a fresh one from the ground, next to a soldier that fell before he got his shot off.

He tries to aim through the smoke, along with the rest of the Continentals still on their feet, as they wait for the next order, then--

CAPTAIN WEBB

FIRE!!!

The Captain brings his sword down as William fires and another CONTINENTAL VOLLEY explodes across the battlefield.

... BANG, BANG, BANG!!!

More screams from the British, then returning MUSKET FIRE whizzing past, and more Continental soldiers falling, dead in the mud.

CAPTAIN WEBB

RELOAD!!!

William still hasn't been hit, and he turns and dives for cover into--

THE SHALLOW TRENCH.

Where he grabs both muskets, trying to re-load as quickly as possible, working with shaking fingers, then pauses when he hears something in the distance.

WILLIAM

Did you hear that?

He turns to the young men who dove next to him, also re-loading their rifles, this is ANDREW THOMAS (17) and JAMES THOMAS (15), brothers.

The noise gets louder, closer, the ground under them begins to shake.

They wait for a moment longer, then with worried and scared eyes, slowly peer over the trench to see:

Swirling smoke on the battlefield, and all's peaceful for another moment, until--

THROUGH THE SMOKE:

A fearsome cavalry charge of screaming HESSIAN MERCENARIES emerges, galloping straight towards them, letting out their fierce and foreign battle cries.

It's a terrifying sight, and William's breath catches in his throat, as he whispers--

WILLIAM
Hessians...

The very word inspires fear as all the Continentals raise their muskets and quickly take aim as they wait, the Hessian cavalry not yet in range.

William sees the look in Andrew and James' eyes, and their shaking hands holding their muskets -- they're all just kids, about to go toe-to-toe with professional soldiers, and they need hope.

He shakes Andrew's shoulder.

WILLIAM
Hey, we're Massachusetts boys, right? So let's show these German bastards just what that means.

Andrew and James look back at him, and then all three nod resolutely, as Andrew says:

ANDREW
Don't tread on me.

William responds:

WILLIAM
Don't tread on me.

And James, too:

JAMES
Don't tread on me.

And then all the other soldiers around them hear, and take up the refrain, too -- *"Don't tread on me, don't tread on me, don't tread on me."*

Then they rise as one, from the trench, defiance still fresh on their lips as they take aim at their charging enemy...

CAPTAIN WEBB
GET READY, MEN... FIND YOUR MARKS...

Captain Webb waits another moment, as the Hessians keep riding towards them, then once they're in range turns to his men and yells--

CAPTAIN WEBB
FIRE AT WILL!!!

... BANG, BANG, BANG!

And as the Continental muskets explode in smoke and a loud volley of bullets--

CUT TO:

A LOW HILL.

Where the Commanders of the Continental Army watch the battle as it unfolds.

MAJOR GENERAL NATHANAEL GREENE (42) looks through a spyglass, sees the charging Hessians, and the volley fired at them by his army.

Some of the Hessians fall, shot from their horses, but not enough.

LT. PAINE (O.S.)
 What are your orders, General Greene?

General Greene folds the spyglass back, then turns to LIEUTENANT JOHN PAINE (30s) standing next to him, waiting for his command.

The General hesitates, hates giving this order, but knows that he has to--

GENERAL GREENE
 There's too many of them. Too many of these brutal and godless savages with no nation...
 (then; the words painful for him)
 Give Captain Webb the order for retreat - save as many of ours as we can, and we'll fight them another day.

LT. PAINE
 Sir...

Lieutenant Paine salutes, then climbs onto his horse, kicks to a gallop riding towards--

CUT TO:

THE BATTLEFIELD.

Where we track with Lieutenant Paine as he makes his ride, men fighting all around him -- *shooting, bleeding, dying* -- mortar shells from the distance EXPLODING large craters in the earth.

He sees a BRITISH SOLDIER take aim at him, from across the battle -- he quickly raises his own PISTOL, takes a split second to aim, and--

... *BANG!*

A perfect shot from horseback, and Paine's bullet explodes directly through the soldier's skull.

And he keeps riding, heading towards--

CUT TO:

THE CONTINENTAL LINES.

And the shallow trench where CAPTAIN WEBB's with his soldiers as they frantically reload their muskets as quickly as possible, jamming powder and bullets down into the long barrels.

The Hessians are bearing down on their position, fighting their way through the battlefield, and most of the Americans have reloaded, as Webb yells again--

CAPTAIN WEBB
... *FIRE AT WILL!!!*

Another EXPLOSION of gunfire from William and the soldiers that have reloaded in time, and more Hessians fall, but there's still so many.

CAPTAIN WEBB
SWORDS!!! BAYONETS!!!!

William breathes heavy as he wields a bayonet on the end of his musket; next to him Andrew and James do the same, waiting for their enemy, as:

The Hessians get closer, closer, closer, almost to them, the Continentals brace themselves, then--

... *CRACK!!!*

The Hessian charge CRASHES INTO THE CONTINENTALS, bringing blood and death, professional soldiers cutting down the sons of farmers.

And as chaos, dirt, and blood consumes everything, we follow close with--

WILLIAM.

As he thrusts his bayonet up at a HESSIAN on horseback, but the blow's parried and he's slammed to the ground by a CHARGING HORSE.

He stands again, completely covered in mud, a gash above his eye, looks above him, as--

... *SLASH!!!*

WILLIAM

Ahhhhhh!!!

A sword slices across his shoulder and he falls to the ground again -- *blood spilling from the wound* -- tries to struggle to his feet, as--

ACROSS THE BATTLEFIELD.

Paine finishes his ride, and gets to the thick of the fighting, uses a sword to cut his way to where Captain Webb fights with his men.

LT. PAINE

... *Captain Webb!!*

Webb turns to see him--

CAPTAIN WEBB

Do you have reinforcements?

LT. PAINE

Orders from General Greene,
Captain.

(a beat; their eyes
meeting)

Retreat...

A heavy moment, as they both process what that means, the disappointment, then--

... *BANG!!!*

A bullet TEARS through Paine's chest in an explosion of blood and flesh, and he falls from his horse, dead before he hits the ground.

Captain Webb runs to him, but sees the wound, and there's nothing he can do -- *Paine's already gone* -- so he turns back to his men, and yells--

CAPTAIN WEBB

RETREAT!!!

A TRUMPETEER takes up the cry -- *sounding his horn* -- as Captain Webb climbs onto Paine's horse, gets a higher vantage to see--

In the distance, there's a river to the north that creates a natural barrier.

CAPTAIN WEBB
*THE RIVER!! TO THE NORTH!! ALL
 CONTINENTALS NORTH TO THE RIVER!!*

Webb starts to fight his way through the Hessians, and the British Regulars now too, leading his men towards the river in the distance, as we go--

BACK TO:

THE MASS OF BODIES.

Where William's climbing back to his feet from being face-down in the mud, and he hears the cry around him, and in the distance--

"Retreat, retreat, retreat," and "North, to the river, Continentals to the river!"

ANDREW (O.S.)
... William!!!

He looks over to see Andrew and his brother James fight their way to him.

WILLIAM
We have to get to the river!

They all nod, and turn north together, about to start their retreat, just as--

... BANG!!!

A bullet EXPLODES Andrew's head inches from William -- bits of blood and brain splatter across their uniforms as Andrew's body collapses, broken.

JAMES
NO!!!

James tries to pick his brother up -- *but he's beyond dead* -- half his face gone.

William grabs James, soldiers running all around them now, and more artillery explosions, coming from the distance, getting closer--

WILLIAM
C'mon, James - we have to go!

JAMES
He's my brother!

WILLIAM
*He'd want you to live! What else
 did he die for? We have to get to
 the river!*

An excruciating moment, as James looks down at his brother's body, then lets him go, tears in their eyes as they turn and start running, when--

A HESSIAN APPEARS.

Sitting high on his horse, above them, his sword drawn, polished steel glinting bright against the sun, as he swings down, and--

... SLASH!!!

In a split second, he rips it through James' chest, opening him completely from shoulder to hip--

WILLIAM
JAMES!!!

And as James falls, the Hessian turns to William, raises his sword, and William freezes -- no bullets left, nothing for him to do but watch wide-eyed with terror, and accept that this is his end.

Then just as the Hessian's about to strike--

... BANG!!!

A bullet buries into his stomach, and he falls, clutching at it, as William turns to see--

CAPTAIN WEBB.

Holding a smoking pistol, on his horse in the distance, then he turns away, back towards the battle, yelling to keep rallying his men--

CAPTAIN WEBB
*TO THE RIVER!! ALL CONTINENTALS TO
 THE RIVER!!!*

William turns to James, bleeding on the ground next to him.

WILLIAM
James...

James opens his mouth to try to speak, but no words come, and he COUGHS blood.

WILLIAM

Don't... don't say anything...

Then James weakly reaches inside his uniform, takes out a folded piece of paper that's smeared with blood, and hands it to William.

He takes it, looks at it in his hands, then tucks it away in a pocket.

WILLIAM

I'll bring it to them - I give you my word.

And by the time he looks back at his friend, James is already gone, blank eyes staring up at the sky above them.

William painfully stands, and he looks around -- *there's soldiers running past, towards the river* -- then he sees the dead Hessian, and the sword at his side.

He picks up the sword, then falls in with the rest of the defeated CONTINENTAL ARMY retreating towards the river.

And as he runs, he sees another Hessian standing over a fallen Continental, and William stabs -- *SHHHFFFT!!!* -- and runs the Hessian through from behind.

The Hessian falls, as William rips the sword back out, stares down at the first man he's killed in such close quarters, and then the soldier he saved.

CONTINENTAL SOLDIER

Thank you.

William's grabs the soldier's hand, pulls him to his feet, tells him--

WILLIAM

Hurry. We need to get to the river.

And they run together, catching up with the retreat, heading towards--

CUT TO:

THE DAN RIVER.

Where CONTINENTAL SOLDIERS splash to the north bank, and there's more on that side that fire at the pursuing BRITISH and HESSIANS.

CAPTAIN WEBB

**HOLD THE RIVER!! GIVE THE REST
TIME TO CROSS!!**

The Continentals have the advantage now, and hold their enemy from crossing as the last of their own make their way safely ashore.

And then, when all the Continentals have crossed and start to head further north, into Virginia, the British stop and don't follow them.

William looks back and sees this, then continues north with the rest of the men, battered and bloody but not yet beaten...

CUT TO:

THE BATTLEFIELD.

And the sharp eyes of LORD CHARLES CORNWALLIS (43), the leader of British forces in America, as he surveys the battlefield in front of him.

Bodies are littered everywhere as far as the eye sees, and while his forces won the day, there are more British bodies on the ground than American.

GENERAL O'HARA (O.S.)

A great victory, my lord.

Cornwallis turns to see GENERAL O'HARA next to him -- then his eyes flick back to the dead.

LORD CORNWALLIS

The Continentals fought fiercely - more bravely than I'd expected, or given them credit for.

(then; softer)

I thought they would break sooner...

GENERAL O'HARA

They're farmers, and the sons of farmers - they had twice our numbers, and you still won the day.

LORD CORNWALLIS

Look around, General. They may be farmers and their sons, but any more "victories" such as this one and it'll be the end of the British Army in America.

(then)

The moment in which this war will be decided is coming - and we need to be better.

And as Cornwallis begins to walk away, we stay on the battlefield, with the bodies.

We drift over them, and see the faces, all of them too young, too innocent, and then a voice softly on the wind, a whispered prayer.

DEBORAH (V.O.)
*Our father, who art in heaven,
 hallowed be thy name...*

And as we PULL BACK, the battlefield in its entirety starts to come into view, and the bodies become smaller and smaller as we rise.

DEBORAH (V.O.)
*Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
 on Earth as it is in heaven...*

There's thousands of them, soldiers lost and forgotten, and then, among the bodies, a soiled CONTINENTAL FLAG, trampled in the mud...

DEBORAH (V.O.)
*And please forgive us our
 trespasses, as we forgive those who
 trespass against us, and deliver us
 from evil...*

CUT TO:

A MIRROR.

And strong sapphire eyes with a deep fire behind them staring back at us, a YOUNG WOMAN holding a cross in her hand as she finishes the Lord's Prayer.

DEBORAH
 ... forever and forever. Amen.

And then she kisses the cross, attached to a chain around her neck, and as she tucks it back under her dress, we get our first glimpse of--

DEBORAH SAMPSON (20s): the woman with the fire in her eyes, high and proud cheek bones, angular jaw and face, and she's tall, standing 5'7' during a time in history when the average height for a woman was barely five feet.

Her dress is plain and simple, made from brown cloth with a white collar.

She's a house servant.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING ROOM -- THOMAS HOUSE -- AFTERNOON

BENJAMIN THOMAS (40s) sits at the head of his table, his wife LYDIA to his right, their four sons (ages 11-2) fill the rest of the places.

Deborah goes to each setting, serving dinner as the family talks.

SUPER: Middleborough, Massachusetts -- April 4th, 1781.

One of the boys motions to her that he wants less vegetables, and with a wink she halves his portion, so his parents don't see, and he smiles.

Then, a KNOCK.

The boys' eyes light up, and so do Deborah's, knowing what this could mean.

BENJAMIN THOMAS
Deborah, would you see who's at the door, please?

Deborah's finished plating the food, and sets the serving dishes aside with a small smile, as she wipes her hands and goes to--

THE HALLWAY.

Where she walks to the door and opens it to find a CONTINENTAL SOLDIER on the threshold; blue waist coat, white vest and polished buttons sewn into red trim, and a Hessian sword hanging at his hip.

William's clean-shaven now, his hair freshly combed, the mud washed off his face.

WILLIAM
Ma'am.
(bows; takes his hat off)
Are you Mrs. Thomas?

DEBORAH
No, I'm... I run the household here.

Behind them, Benjamin appears in the hallway, holding his napkin.

BENJAMIN
Who is it?

WILLIAM
 My name is Private William Jaffers,
 sir.

When Benjamin sees William, he reaches out to touch the wall, to steady himself, because he knows what an unfamiliar soldier on his doorstep means.

And it's more than he can bear.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM -- THOMAS HOUSE -- NIGHT

Deborah kneels beside her bed, her cross out again as she prays.

Beneath her, in the kitchen, she can hear the muffled sobs of Lydia Thomas grieving her lost sons, a sound that chills to the bone.

Deborah finishes, and climbs into bed; waits for another moment, sadness in her eyes, then blows the candle out and the room goes dark.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN -- THOMAS HOUSE -- DAWN

The sun's not yet up as Deborah walks into the kitchen, dressed in her servants uniform, and puts a pot of water on to boil.

She ties an apron around her waist, starts to take ingredients from a cupboard to make oatmeal, her morning chores, when--

BENJAMIN (O.S.)
 You don't need to make breakfast today - I don't think anyone's going to have much appetite.

Deborah turns to see Benjamin sitting in shadows, a glass of whiskey in front of him, James' note with blood still smeared across it next to the glass.

A moment, then--

DEBORAH
 I'm so sorry.

BENJAMIN
 I am, too.

Deborah doesn't know what else to say, and there's silence until she finally manages to get out what she's dreaded asking.

DEBORAH
(softly)
Both of them?

BENJAMIN
At the same battle.

Another moment, then Benjamin reaches out, takes another glass and pours a whiskey for Deborah.

BENJAMIN
For Andrew and James. Rebels, and
Massachusetts boys, to the very
end.

She hesitates.

BENJAMIN
Go on. It's alright.

She picks up the glass, meets his eyes, then nods.

DEBORAH
For Andrew and James.

And then they both drain the whiskey, and set the glasses down, and he stays staring at them, shaking his head.

BENJAMIN
It was my fault. There was too
much talk of patriotism and
revolution in this house, too many
ideals being thrown about between
these walls.
(then; softer)
I didn't fire the bullets, but in
the end it was still their father
that killed them, all the same.

DEBORAH
Sir...

BENJAMIN
You're excused from work today.

He stands and walks to the doorway, then pauses for a moment and turns back -- he's been drinking, but his thoughts are still lucid.

BENJAMIN
Life's precious, Deborah. And what
we do with our lives matters.

DEBORAH

It's not your fault, Mr. Thomas.
You should be proud of them, and
what they did.

BENJAMIN

I am. More proud than you could
possibly imagine.

(beat)

And that's what makes it so
difficult.

And then, with one more look, he turns and leaves, and
Deborah's alone.

Everything's silent for a moment, as she weighs an important
decision, something that's been on her mind for a long time.

Then she takes off her apron, puts it away, and walks
outside.

RECRUITER (PRE-LAP)

THE TIME TO ENLIST IS NOW!!!

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET -- MIDDLEBOROUGH, MASSACHUSETTS -- MORNING

A bustling Colonial town that's been recently freed from
British rule.

Deborah walks down the street, and she looks quite different;
her hair's pulled tight under a cap, which makes it look
short, like a boy's, and she's wearing modified breeches.

RECRUITER (O.S.)

*You may have heard that the battle
at Guilford Court House was a
defeat, and while it's true we
didn't win the day, we took
hundreds of the Redcoat bastards
with us, and that's why we need
your service!!*

Deborah pushes her way through a crowd to see a CONTINENTAL
RECRUITER standing on an APPLE CRATE, delivering his speech
to the gathered young men.

RECRUITER

*We're on the verge of turning the
tide of this war, and we need more
men!!*

(MORE)

RECRUITER (CONT'D)

Lord Cornwallis himself was even heard to have said after the battle that if the British have many more "victories" such as this one, then this country will soon be called America indeed!!!

The crowd lets up a CHEER, and Deborah glances at the men, nobody's looking at her twice.

RECRUITER

Every man that volunteers will receive food, board, and a pension after the war's over. And more importantly... you'll be able to live the rest of your lives knowing that you took up arms in the name of freedom, and for the defense of a country that one day we'll be able to call our own.

He GLARES out at them.

RECRUITER

SO ARE YOU WITH ME??? ARE THERE ANY PATRIOTS IN THE GREAT STATE OF MASSACHUSETTS???

There's thunderous APPLAUSE as the Recruiter steps down, and the young men rush forward to the table he has set up, eager to do their part.

TIME CUT TO:

THE RECRUITMENT TABLE.

Deborah waits in the line of young men until very soon it's her turn, and she walks forward, stands in front of the Recruiter.

RECRUITER

Name and age?

DEBORAH

John. 21.

RECRUITER

Surname?

She hesitates a moment, then--

DEBORAH

... Smith.

The Recruiter pauses at that, looks up, raising an eyebrow.

RECRUITER

And what's next... you're gonna
tell me I'm Pocahontas?

Deborah swallows, she panicked and said the most common name she could think of, and didn't sell it well.

Then the Recruiter squints at her, looking closer, a strand of hair peeking from under her cap.

RECRUITER

What's this?

He reaches to touch the strand, but she shoves his hand away.

DEBORAH

Is it a crime to have long hair
now?

RECRUITER

We don't care the length of your
hair as long as you can fire a
musket.

DEBORAH

Then it sounds like I've come to
the right place.

He waits for a moment, studying her face... *does he realize what she's hiding?*

Then he goes back to his ledger, starts to write her name.

RECRUITER

John... Smith... twenty-one...

YOUNG MAN (O.S.)

... Deborah?

She turns on instinct when she hears her name, and there's a YOUNG MAN behind them.

YOUNG MAN

Deborah Sampson, is that you? What
are you doing here?

The Recruiter looks up, glances at the Young Man, then back to Deborah.

He narrows his eyes.

RECRUITER

Take your hat off...

Deborah freezes -- *knows she's been caught* -- then turns and runs.

RECRUITER
*AFTER HER!! It's a woman dressed
 as a man!!*

And as the Recruiter shouts the order, three CONTINENTAL SOLDIERS run down the street in pursuit.

CUT TO:

THE STREETS (MIDDLEBOROUGH).

Deborah's a strong runner, she has lengthy strides from her long legs, and she's crafty, knows this city well.

She runs through a mass of people, zig-zagging, taking sharp corners down back streets and through shops until she loses the soldiers.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY -- THOMAS HOUSE -- MORNING

Deborah runs back inside, locks the front door behind her, out of breath.

She peaks out the window, sees everything quiet on the street then quickly hurries upstairs.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM -- THOMAS HOUSE -- MORNING

Deborah slowly pushes the door to an empty bedroom open with a long *creeeek*, and quietly walks in.

She crosses to a dusty trunk and opens it, looks at the clothes inside, about to reach down and take some of them out, when--

BENJAMIN (O.S.)
 What are you doing in here?

Deborah quickly turns to see Benjamin standing in the doorway, his eyes red from grief and whiskey.

DEBORAH
 I'm sorry, Mr. Thomas.

Benjamin comes forward and looks down into the trunk, sees the clothing there that once belonged to his dead sons.

Then he looks up, taking in the way that she's tried to dress, and he understands.

BENJAMIN
For how long?

DEBORAH
Since I can remember.

A moment between them, as Benjamin searches her eyes, looking for truth.

Then, KNOCK!

Someone vigorously banging on the front door to the house, below them.

Benjamin hears, and knows what it must be, and turns back to Deborah, one more question.

BENJAMIN
Why?

She hesitates for a moment, then meets his eyes, her own strong and true.

DEBORAH
Because what we do with our lives matters, right? So why can I not fight for my country, too?

He hears his own words spoken back to him, the logic of what she's saying, and what she feels, and after a moment he nods.

Then he takes a pair of well-made breeches from the trunk, two finely sewn shirts, and a cap, and hands them all to her.

BENJAMIN
Use the back door, and get out of Middleborough. In small towns, everyone knows who we are - go to the city, and you can be whoever you like.

DEBORAH
Thank you.

BENJAMIN
Kill two of them for me, alright?
One for James, and the other for Andrew.

And she nods, as he turns and leaves, Deborah following him back down the stairs.

CUT TO:

THE HALLWAY (THOMAS HOUSE).

Where Deborah splits off from Benjamin and goes towards the kitchen while he walks to the front door where there's still vigorous pounding from the other side.

They pause and share one last look down the hallway -- *one last nod* -- then when she turns and is out of sight, he opens the door.

BENJAMIN

What is it?

On the other side: the three CONTINENTAL SOLDIERS sent to chase Deborah.

SOLDIER

We're looking for your house
servant, sir.

BENJAMIN

Why?

SOLDIER

She's been caught doing
something... *undecent*.

BENJAMIN

Well, she's not here. I gave her
the day off.

They look back at him, a bit incredulous, and he opens the door wider.

BENJAMIN

You're welcome to come in and take
a look for yourselves, if you'd
like - her room's up the stairs and
to the right.

And as the soldiers come into the house, going up the stairs, looking for Deborah--

CUT TO:

POURING RAIN (NIGHT).

And Deborah rides through the storm, her long hair damp on her face and shoulders, clothes completely soaked through.

There's a LIGHT in the distance, coming from a window, and then a sign for THE ADMIRAL INN.

She rides towards it.

DEBORAH (PRE-LAP)
 (softly)
*I run to you, my Lord, for
 protection...*

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM -- THE ADMIRAL INN -- NIGHT

Deborah stands in front of a dirty mirror, wet hair falling past her shoulders as she wraps a long piece of white linen around her chest, wincing as she binds her breasts flat.

DEBORAH
*... and to be my rock, my mighty
 rock, and my fortress...*

Then she raises a pair of scissors and begins to cut her hair short, close to the scalp, like a boy's, long strands falling at her feet.

DEBORAH
*... and I ask for your strength to
 now be my strength...*

And as she continues to work, cutting closer, continuing her prayer...

CUT TO:

EXT. BOSTON -- ESTABLISHING

Smoke rises from chimneys above a city nestled against the infamous harbor on one side and bustling, narrow streets on the other.

SUPER: Boston, Massachusetts -- April 7th, 1781.

Move closer to the city, feel the energy emanating from it, and see it in the people's eyes, these streets that gave the spark of revolution.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS -- BOSTON -- DAY

Deborah walks through the city, her short hair covered beneath the cap that Benjamin gave her, and she's wearing the breaches and shirt, too, so she looks like a young man.

She passes a grocer on one side, and then a baker, and finally comes to--

CUT TO:

INT. GUN STORE -- BOSTON -- DAY

Deborah walks in to see a room filled with all sorts of firearms mounted on the walls; muskets, pistols, everything in between.

There's a PROPRIETOR behind the desk, who stands when she enters, and one other customer.

PROPRIETOR
How can I help you, sir?

She pauses, notes the use of the word '*sir*', and it gives her confidence.

DEBORAH
I'm looking to buy a musket.

PROPRIETOR
And for what, might I ask? There's different firearms for different purposes.

DEBORAH
I'm enlisting today.

PROPRIETOR
(smiles)
Understood. We've got plenty of muskets that are good for killing Redcoats.

The Proprietor turns to survey his inventory as Deborah watches, then the other Customer speaks up, behind them.

PAUL (O.S.)
They give you one when you enlist, you know. A musket, that is.

Deborah turns to look at the man: he's average height, carrying a bit of extra weight in the stomach that also gives him a thick neck and broad shoulders; in 1781 he was 46 years old, and his name is Paul.

DEBORAH
I suppose I wanted to look the part when I showed up.

PAUL
There's looking the part, and then there's *being* the part.
(points to the wall)
Might I suggest a Screw-Barrel Flintlock?

PROPRIETOR
Excellent suggestion.

The Proprietor places the PISTOL in front of them.

PAUL
It's an English gun, but don't let
the manufacturing deter you.
Muskets take a long time to reload,
and you never know when you might
need an extra bullet.

She looks at Paul, then back to the Proprietor, and nods.

DEBORAH
I'll take it.

PROPRIETOR
Very good. And thank you for your
service.

She starts to count out her money, then takes the pistol, as
behind her Paul leaves.

CUT TO:

THE STREETS (BOSTON).

Where Deborah jogs a few paces to catch up with where Paul
walks through the people.

DEBORAH
Thank you. For the recommendation.

PAUL
It's the least I can do.

DEBORAH
Are you a soldier?

PAUL
I'm a dentist.

DEBORAH
How does a dentist know so much
about guns? And war, too, I
suppose.

He pauses, turns to her, a small smile pursed on his lips.

PAUL
I'm from Boston, young sir. This
revolution was born in these
streets.

And then with a tip of his cap, he continues on his way,
disappearing back among the people.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS -- BOSTON -- MORNING

Deborah stands in another recruitment line filled with young men, she's still dressed as a boy, and has her new PISTOL tucked in her belt at her waist.

She waits her turn. There's an OFFICER behind a desk, similar to how it was set up in Middleborough, filling out paperwork.

She looks behind the Officer to see a large poster with a picture of a snake, and the initials of all the colonies, with a caption beneath:

"JOIN OR DIE."

OFFICER

Next!

It's her turn, and she stands in front of the Officer.

OFFICER

Name and age?

She doesn't hesitate this time.

DEBORAH

Robert Shurtleff. 21.

He looks up at her. Takes in her appearance. The clothing. The pistol at her hip.

OFFICER

Can you read, Mr. Shurtleff?

DEBORAH

I can.

OFFICER

Then raise your right hand and repeat these words.

He hands her a sheet, and she looks down at it, then reads the oath--

DEBORAH

I, Robert Shurtleff, have this day voluntarily enlisted myself as a soldier in the American Continental Army, for one year, unless sooner discharged: and I do bind myself to conform, in all instances, to such rules and regulations as are, or shall be, established for the government of this army.

(beat)

So help me God.

OFFICER

Good. Now sign here.

The Officer points to the bottom and Deborah signs, then he takes her regiment assignment and hands it to her.

OFFICER

Congratulations, Mr. Shurtleff, and welcome to the 4th Massachusetts Regiment of the Continental Army. Your Congress thanks you for your service.

Deborah stands there for a moment, and the Officer looks past her.

OFFICER

Next!

She comes back to reality, and quickly walks away, holding the paper he gave her, and then when she's far enough, lets herself look down at it.

And as she reads it, and the small smile starts to spread across her face...

FADE TO:

EXT. AERIAL SHOT -- MILITARY CAMP -- MORNING

Dawn breaks softly over a small encampment of Continental Soldiers.

SUPER: 4th Massachusetts Regiment, Springfield, MA -- May 13th, 1781.

Tents stretch in neat rows across a field for as far as the eye sees.

CAPTAIN WEBB (PRE-LAP)

READY!!!

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD -- MILITARY ENCAMPMENT -- MORNING

All the NEW RECRUITS are assembled in a long line, pointing their muskets towards straw targets shaped roughly as men in the distance, and we find Deborah among them, dressed in the same clothes.

CAPTAIN WEBB

AIM!!!

They all pick their marks as Captain Webb walks behind the line, inspecting the formation and each of the soldiers.

CAPTAIN WEBB

FIRE!!!

CLICK, CLICK, CLICK.

Instead of explosions and musket balls, hammers click against steel.

The muskets aren't loaded.

CAPTAIN WEBB

Ammunition is scarce for the entire army, and it has been for some time now.

Captain Webb comes around to stand in front of the new recruits.

CAPTAIN WEBB

That means the first bullets you fire will be on the battlefield, but the only thing that you need to remember is exactly what I just told you.

(beat)

Ready, aim, fire.

(then)

Do you understand?

They answer as one.

RECRUITS

YES, SIR!

He paces in front of them, making eye contact, speaking softer now.

CAPTAIN WEBB

Stand close to the man next to you. Watch over him as you'd want to be watched over, and don't be afraid if he falls. The British are the greatest military force ever assembled, so some of you standing here today will indeed fall, but we're going to win this war, because this is America, and this is *our* country, and we're going to defend it with everything that we have in us.

(meets their eyes)

That's why you're here, isn't it?

Close on: Deborah's eyes, which tells us that's *exactly* why she's here.

RECRUITS

YES, SIR!

CAPTAIN WEBB

Good. Now head to your barracks and get outfitted with a uniform and job assignment.

Captain Webb walks away, as the Recruits break ranks and we follow with Deborah, as she goes with them towards--

CUT TO:

INT. BARRACKS -- MILITARY ENCAMPMENT -- MORNING

Deborah stands in line with the other recruits until she's in front of an OFFICER.

OFFICER

You're tall. Looks like a large to me.

He tosses her a UNIFORM, and as she takes it, and looks down, there's reverence in her eyes as she touches the white vest and blue coat, the polished buttons sewn into red trim.

OFFICER

You're going to be assigned cooking duty, so that means report to Messhall after you bunk up.

And as she nods...

CUT TO:

EXT. MILITARY ENCAMPMENT -- DAY

Deborah walks back the way she came, through the long rows of tents, then pauses, looking around, she took a wrong turn somewhere.

WILLIAM (O.S.)

They only give you one, so take some advice and keep it as well as you can.

Deborah turns to see William Jaffers sitting on a cut tree stump, outside a tent that's larger than the rest, needle and thread in hand, his Hessian sword at his hip, as he tries to mend a hole in his uniform.

He looks closer at Deborah, sees her face, narrows his eyes.

WILLIAM
Have I met you before?

DEBORAH
I don't think so. It's my first
day.

She turns and starts to walk away--

WILLIAM
Wait. You look familiar. I'm sure
of it.

She pauses, slowly turns back as he studies her features, and
thinks quickly, nods to the uniform in his lap, trying to
distract.

DEBORAH
You're doing that wrong.

WILLIAM
What?

DEBORAH
You have to run the thread under
the stitching.

WILLIAM
Under it? What do you mean?

She hesitates, but with no other choice goes over and takes
the uniform and demonstrates, as he raises an eyebrow,
impressed at her skill.

She starts to hand it back, then a voice from behind them--

CAPTAIN WEBB (O.S.)
Where'd you learn how to sew like
that?

Deborah turns to see Captain Webb and knows that she needs to
think quickly again.

DEBORAH
Eight younger brothers, sir. We
had no parents to speak of, growing
up, so I had to learn everything
around the house.

He stands there, and studies her face: her eyes, her chin,
then further down.

CAPTAIN WEBB
What's your name?

DEBORAH
Robert Shurtleff, sir.

Another moment, as the Captain takes her in, then he makes his decision.

CAPTAIN WEBB
Come with me, Mr. Shurtleff.

And he walks past her and into the large Captain's tent, and after a backwards glance at William, she has no choice but to follow after him.

CUT TO:

INT. CAPTAIN'S TENT -- MILITARY ENCAMPMENT -- MORNING

Captain Webb's tent is sparsely decorated; there's a table, two chairs, and a small cot, the same as his soldiers are issued.

CAPTAIN WEBB
This happened at the Court House,
and I'm going to be seeing the
General soon - do you think you can
help me?

She doesn't understand, then he takes off his jacket and shows her the sleeve where there's a large tear running up to the elbow.

DEBORAH
I can see what I can do.

CAPTAIN WEBB
Good. Have it back to me by
tomorrow. Did they give you a job?

DEBORAH
Yes, sir. Cooking duty.

CAPTAIN WEBB
I'm changing it. You're going to
be my new aide-de-camp. Do you
have a bunk yet?

DEBORAH
No.

CAPTAIN WEBB
Jaffers!

As soon as the Captain yells, the flap to the tent opens and William walks in.

CAPTAIN WEBB

Help Mr. Shurtleff here find a bunk, and make sure that it's close to mine - he's going to be my new aide-de-camp.

William salutes, then leads Deborah out of the tent, carrying the Captain's jacket in her arms.

CUT TO:

EXT. TENTS -- MILITARY ENCAMPMENT -- MORNING

William and Deborah leave together and he shows her away from the tent, through the organized rows.

DEBORAH

What's an aide-de-camp?

WILLIAM

It's doing whatever the Captain needs, really. Fetching things. Errands.

DEBORAH

But aide-de-camps are still allowed to fight, right?

WILLIAM

No. Your place will be with the Captain, to do anything that he needs.

DEBORAH

Are you sure?

WILLIAM

Well, considering that I've been the Captain's aide-de-camp from Guilford Court House until about five minutes ago... yes, I'm fairly sure.

She pauses.

DEBORAH

Wait - am I taking your job?

WILLIAM

You are. And it's a happy day for me, because that means I'm a Lieutenant now.

They get to the QUARTERMASTER'S TENT, and William takes a cot from the attendant, which he passes to Deborah, then starts back the way they came.

DEBORAH
Where are we going?

WILLIAM
The Captain said to find you a tent
near his own. So here we are.

They come to a tent that looks like all the rest, and William pushes the flap open and goes inside.

CUT TO:

INT. TENT -- MILITARY ENCAMPMENT -- MORNING

Deborah walks in and looks around; the tent's completely empty except for William's cot in the corner, and a small trunk next to it.

DEBORAH
I don't get my own tent?

WILLIAM
There's already three men in all
the others.

DEBORAH
How come there's not three men in
here.

WILLIAM
There was.

A moment, as she looks at him, and she understands when she sees the emotion in his eyes.

DEBORAH
I'm sorry.

WILLIAM
It's war.
(then; trying to convince
himself)
Men die in war.

He allows himself one more moment, then nods to the far side of the tent.

WILLIAM
You can get yourself set up over
there.

Deborah goes to put her cot down, as she looks back at him, over her shoulder, wondering how she's going to make this work, and keep her secret.

TIME CUT TO:

THE TENT (LATER).

It's night now, and the tent's lit by a small candle, light flickering across Deborah's face as she sits in the shadows and sews the Captain's uniform.

Behind her, William's changing his clothes, unbuttoning his shirt and taking it off.

His chest is sinewy and taught, and he's still young, really, only on the verge of manhood, with room left for him to fill out.

DEBORAH
 (nods to the scar on his
 shoulder)
 How'd that happen?

He looks over at her, then glances at the red and angry flesh that's been poorly stitched together.

WILLIAM
 A Hessian.

DEBORAH
 Did you kill him?

He's down to his underwear now, and doesn't want to talk about it, so he walks over to the candle and blows it out.

WILLIAM
 Let's get some sleep - it's going
 to be a long march tomorrow.

And she watches through the darkness as he lays on his cot, pulling a blanket up, his eyes staring at the ceiling.

Then, after a moment, Deborah puts aside her work, lays down on her cot, too, fully clothed, still wearing her hat, even, as she holds her cross and begins to silently whisper her prayer before sleep.

CUT TO:

EXT. DIRT ROAD -- COUNTRYSIDE -- DAY

The Continental Army is marching with Captain Webb and a few other Officers on horses at the front while the rest follow on foot, in disciplined formation.

Deborah walks behind Captain Webb's horse, and William's next to her -- she sees a SIGNPOST on the side of the road, and William catches her looking at it.

WILLIAM
 Something the matter?

DEBORAH

Nothing, it's just... I've never been outside of Massachusetts before.

He smiles.

WILLIAM

It's a whole big country out there, Robert Shurtleff.

(then)

Are you ready to fight for it?

She gives him a look, then he half-smiles, which she returns, as they continue on past the signpost and into Connecticut.

CUT TO:

INT. CAPTAIN'S TENT -- MILITARY ENCAMPMENT -- DAY

All the Officers are gathered in Captain Webb's tent, and there's a map on a table in front of them, pieces set on it to represent different armies.

Deborah walks between the men, pouring water into glasses, and William's among them, too; the youngest and newest junior officer.

CAPTAIN WEBB

The Marquis de Lafayette and the French forces are approaching from the east and north to shadow Cornwallis' movements and keep him engaged in Virginia.

Captain Webb, in his freshly sewn uniform, moves two pieces on the map, one in the Atlantic Ocean, and one to the north, in Maryland, so that they're on either side of Cornwallis in Virginia.

CAPTAIN WEBB

General Washington is in Delaware, and he'll march south soon, while General Greene, who's rallying our troops in South Carolina and Georgia, will swing north and meet him here, in Virginia...

(taps the map at Virginia;
where Cornwallis' piece
sits)

... trapping Lord Cornwallis between our forces.

An OFFICER speaks up--

OFFICER

Will we have enough men to defeat him?

CAPTAIN WEBB

With the French helping... we might. But before that happens, Washington has sent to us directly with orders to lay siege to New York City.

OFFICER

New York City?

CAPTAIN WEBB

It's going to be a false offensive. When we attack, the British will send riders for reinforcements, and that's what the General wants. Except, we only want riders going south, so Cornwallis thinks our forces are occupied here in the north. Which means we need to intercept all riders they send north towards Albany.

(taps the map; just west of Manhattan)

There's only one bridge from Manhattan to New Jersey, here at Tarrytown - that's the bridge the riders'll take, and we need to be there to make sure they don't make it.

Deborah inches her way forward, so she can see the map, and follow what Webb's showing his officers.

William speaks up, all youthful brashness, eager to get back into action.

WILLIAM

I can hold the bridge, with a small detachment - if you go personally, or any other officer they know, they might suspect something.

Webb nods--

CAPTAIN WEBB

Take fifty soldiers and don't let a single one of those bastards off that island. The rest of you'll be with me, at the city - the siege of New York needs to look convincing, so that they take the bait.

All the OFFICERS salute before they leave, and then it's just Deborah left with Captain Webb, as she clears the map.

He watches her, narrowing his eyes.

CAPTAIN WEBB
You realize what you just saw is of
the very strictest confidentiality -
even in our own camp.

DEBORAH
Yes, sir.

She's gathered the map, and puts it away, and he notes her
body language.

CAPTAIN WEBB
There's something else that's
wrong?

DEBORAH
I was just wondering... what's my
place going to be?

CAPTAIN WEBB
You're my aide-de-camp. So your
place will be with me, wherever I'm
at.

DEBORAH
And during a siege, that's by the
cannons, isn't it? Behind the
army, and away from everything
that's happening?

He sees the look on her face, and in her eyes, and knows what
it is that she's after.

CAPTAIN WEBB
What, you want to go with Jaffers,
is that it? You want your first
blood?

DEBORAH
I'd like to fight, yes. And I
think I'd be a good candidate to go
on his mission.

CAPTAIN WEBB
And why's that? Have you fought in
a battle before? Killed a man?
Fired a musket, even?

She's about to open her mouth, but can't find an answer, so
instead--

DEBORAH
With all respect, sir, I didn't
sign up to pour water and sew
uniforms.

CAPTAIN WEBB

No. You signed up to follow orders, and you have yours, and they're final. Do you understand?

A heavy moment, then she nods, her eyes meeting his, and there's fire in them--

DEBORAH

Yes, sir.

CAPTAIN WEBB

Good. You're dismissed.

And then Captain Webb goes to his desk as Deborah gathers the last of the used glasses and walks outside.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAPTAINS'S TENT -- MILITARY ENCAMPMENT -- NIGHT

Deborah stands outside the Captain's tent, unhappy with what's happened.

She looks back where she just came from, then down the rows towards her tent, silently weighing something in her head.

Then she comes to her decision, starts to walk, with purpose in her stride now, and maybe some defiance, too, as we--

FADE TO:

EXT. TENT -- MILITARY ENCAMPMENT -- MORNING

Deborah stands outside the tent that she shares with William as he cinches his Hessian sword to his waist, then picks up his musket and shoulders a SACHEL to take with him on his march to Tarrytown.

He gives her final instructions.

WILLIAM

You'll have to learn the rest of the job on the fly, but there's really not much to it, just fetch anything that he asks for - you go to the Messhall for food or drink, and the Quartermaster for anything else, and make sure to tell them it's for the Captain so you get it quickly and you get the best. Understand?

She nods.

WILLIAM

And when you're in his tent, and there's other Officers there, just stay out of the way - the main goal of the job is to be seen and not heard...

She nods again, but there's another look behind her eyes now, an anger that he doesn't see.

WILLIAM

You'll do just fine, and you can tell me all about the siege when I return.

DEBORAH

The false siege.

William gives her a look, then another soldier walks up behind them, puts his arm around William's shoulder, this is TATUM SCOTT (20s).

SCOTT

The men are ready to get a move on, Juffers, and these Redcoat bastards sure as hell aren't gonna kill themselves, are they?

There's a look between Deborah and Scott, as he tips his hat to her.

And then Scott and William leave, towards the fifty men gathered in the distance.

Deborah watches as they join the other soldiers, and then start their march, jealousy in her eyes as they leave camp.

CUT TO:

INT. CAPTAIN'S TENT -- MILITARY ENCAMPMENT -- DAY

Captain Webb's meeting with more of his officers; they're going over siege strategy, and have a detailed map of New York City in front of them.

He turns to Deborah, standing at attention by the tent flap, but she's staring into the distance, her thoughts clearly elsewhere.

CAPTAIN WEBB

Shurtleff.

She doesn't answer.

CAPTAIN WEBB

Shurtleff!!!

She looks up, and sees him holding out a kettle for her to refill.

CAPTAIN WEBB
More coffee.

Deborah takes the pot and walks outside.

CUT TO:

EXT. MILITARY ENCAMPMENT -- DAY

Deborah walks between the tents, until she comes to the Messhall, soldiers sitting at tables outside having their lunch.

But she keeps walking.

She goes past the soldiers eating, and on towards--

A FIELD.

At the edge of camp, where SOLDIERS are drilling, lined up in formation, pretending to shoot at targets in the distance on their Officer's orders, the same as we saw Deborah doing her first day.

And as their hammers CLICK, the Officer sees Deborah walking by, calls to her--

OFFICER
*Hey!! You, there. Where the hell
d'you think you're going?*

She gives him a look -- *doesn't miss a beat* -- speaks with confidence.

DEBORAH
Take a piss.

She keeps walking, and the Officer accepts that, goes back to his men, as she comes to--

THE FOREST.

Where she walks through the trees, towards a LARGE OAK where she finds hidden under a pile of leaves a MUSKET and SACHEL, like the one that William wore when he left.

She came out and hid this gear here last night, so she'd be able to come back for it.

She shoulders the satchel, grabs the musket, then starts jogging silently through the trees, tossing the coffee pot aside as she goes.

CUT TO:

EXT. DIRT ROAD -- COUNTRYSIDE -- DAY

William marches at the head of his men with Tatum Scott next to him; they've been marching for awhile, and the sun's high above.

Then, behind the soldiers, Deborah slips from the trees and joins the men marching at the back, one of the soldiers raising an eyebrow.

DEBORAH
Had to take a piss.

He doesn't say anything, just nods and turns back forward, and a small smile spreads across her face.

That excuse seems to work for everything.

CUT TO:

EXT. TARRYTOWN -- DAY

The Continentals keep marching, turn a bend, and the trees start to part as in front of them is the small village of TARRYTOWN.

They walk towards it, and as they get closer, William stops, stands on the side of the road to speak to his men as they pass by him.

WILLIAM
We'll make camp outside the town -
get some lunch and eat a little
extra because the Redcoats will be
here soon.

He looks at the men as they pass, and Deborah moves as far from him as she can, turns her head so he doesn't see her.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS -- TARRYTOWN -- DAY

William stands with the MAYOR of Tarrytown at the edge of the city where the bridge crosses the Hudson River, Manhattan on the other side.

WILLIAM

So this is it? And there's no other bridges?

MAYOR

No. Ours is the only way on or off the island to the west or north, if you care to stay dry.

William takes in the bridge, making strategic calculations as to the best way to defend it.

There's foliage all around, and his men can blend in with the trees and bushes.

WILLIAM

The British might be here as early as this afternoon, so please tell your people to leave as soon as possible.

The Mayor nods, and turns to go back to the city and tell the villagers what's about to happen.

William leaves, too, in the opposite direction, back towards the outskirts, and--

THE CONTINENTAL CAMP.

Where his men are sitting around a fire they've built to cook their meal, as behind them villagers start to evacuate the town.

William is about to get some food himself, when he pauses.

Deborah tries to turn away, but he sees her this time, and walks over.

WILLIAM

What the hell are you doing here, Shurtleff?

DEBORAH

The same thing as you, I'd suspect.

WILLIAM

The Captain told you not to come, and that was a direct order! Back to camp. *NOW!*

The other soldiers turn to look, as the scene plays out, waiting to see what's going to happen, but Deborah doesn't back down.

She's got that fire back in her eyes again.

DEBORAH

No.

WILLIAM

Then I'll take you myself.

DEBORAH

There's not enough time.

WILLIAM

Scott!

Tatum Scott stands, starts to walk to them, but Deborah's eyes never leave William's.

DEBORAH

The British will be here soon,
you've said so yourself, twice now.
It's more than a day's march back,
and you can't spare any men to take
me, and I won't go on my own.

William pauses. Glaring back at her. Because he knows she's right...

WILLIAM

So that's what you came for, then,
is it? To make a fool of me, and
yourself, too?

DEBORAH

No. I came to fight.

And with that, she walks past him, and there's nothing he can do but watch her go.

SCOTT

He's right, you know. We're going
to need every man that we've got.

WILLIAM

Goddammit, of course I know that!

And Scott raises his eyebrows, and then his hands, too, as he leaves, and William shakes his head, as we--

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON:

Deborah's face, as she smears dark pine tar across it, until her skin's black, and the only color showing is the white of her eyes.

She turns and walks through the town, past the buildings, and comes to--

THE BRIDGE (TARRYTOWN).

Where the Continental Soldiers are hidden among the trees with pine tar smeared on their faces, too, blending in with the foliage, the troops split evenly between the North and South sides of the bridge.

Deborah carries two muskets, and takes her place among the soldiers on the North side where each Continental holds a musket and has an extra on the ground.

Then she looks across the road, at the South side, where she sees--

William's sitting there watching her, with Scott next to him, and the other half of the soldiers.

Deborah meets William's eyes for a moment, then she turns back to the bridge, takes out her cross, starts her prayer:

DEBORAH

(sotto)

*The Lord is my shepherd; he
restoreth my soul, and leads me on
the paths of righteousness...*

Scott taps William on the shoulder, and he turns to see a group of red-coated BRITISH SOLDIERS, in the distance, marching towards the bridge.

William watches them for a moment, then turns to Scott, whispers--

WILLIAM

If anything happens to me, make
sure you get the men back to the
main army as quickly as possible.

Scott nods, as British keep coming, all told about 100 of them, which is twice the number of Continentals waiting to ambush them on the bridge.

SUPER: "The Battle of Tarrytown" -- July 15th, 1781.

The Continentals all look to William, waiting for his word to spring their trap, and he waits, letting them get closer.

The first Redcoat sets his foot on the bridge, then the rest, and it's not long until all the soldiers are near the middle.

William quietly raises his hand.

The British keep marching, almost to where the Continentals are hiding, near the other side of the bridge, and the town.

There's another breathless moment, William waiting for the exact right time, then--

WILLIAM

NOW!!!

He brings his hand down as the Continentals rise and open fire, exploding a VOLLEY into the ranks of British soldiers.

BANG, BANG, BANG, BANG!!!

The bridge erupts in a cloud of musket smoke as the first wave of British fall, dead before they hit the bridge.

WILLIAM

SECOND VOLLEY, READY!!!

Then Continentals reach down and grab their spare muskets, Deborah among them, and she takes aim, into the mass of Redcoats--

WILLIAM

FIRE!!!

BANG, BANG, BANG, BANG!!!

More Continental musket fire, and another wave of British soldiers fall.

The rest of the Redcoats see the trap now, and OPEN FIRE themselves--

Three CONTINENTALS around Deborah go down with bullets to the chest, and one soldier screams as he takes a shot in the face.

Then British dive to safety -- to the sides of the bridge -- and there's smoke everywhere, making it hard to see anything, for either side.

William yells to his soldiers--

WILLIAM

RELOAD!!!

It's a race as Continentals and British each hurry to reload, filling barrels with powder and musket balls, packing it tight, and it's at the exact same moment that they each swing their rifles back up, and--

BANG, BANG, BANG!!!

Shots ring from both sides, and a bullet tears through the sleeve of Deborah's uniform; she looks down, but there's no blood.

Around her, more Continentals falls, and so do more Redcoats, across from them.

William looks around, they don't have the element of surprise anymore, and they're outnumbered on the bridge.

WILLIAM
*RETREAT!!! EVERYONE BACK TO THE
 CITY!!!*

The Continentals turn and run back towards Tarrytown as more musket shots ring out -- *BANG, BANG!!* -- and two Continentals fall, shot in the back.

The British chase after them, and in the confusion we follow with Deborah, who's running as fast as she can, then there's an EXPLOSION and a musket ball flies past her ear, just as she dives--

BEHIND A BUILDING.

Where she lands on her back and finishes reloading her musket again, jamming a bullet into the barrel, then looks across the street to see--

WILLIAM.

Who's also hiding behind a building, and as he peaks around and sees the British charging towards them -- *what he wants* -- he draws his Hessian sword.

WILLIAM
ONE MORE VOLLEY!!!

And as the British pour into the city, the Continentals jump from behind buildings and fire a final round--

BANG, BANG, BANG!!!

And more British fall in the streets -- *blood spilling across cobblestone* -- and the remaining Redcoats fire their last shots at the Continentals in desperation--

BANG, BANG!!!

And two more Continentals fall, but William has his moment now, and yells--

WILLIAM
SWORDS!!! BAYONETS!!! CHARGE!!!

The Continentals SCREAM and CHARGE at the British -- *bayonets lowered* -- and to Deborah's right, she sees William out in front, leading them.

He meets the British first -- *parries a blow* -- then runs a Redcoat through the stomach with a swift and practiced stroke from his sword.

Deborah sees this, then lets out her own cry--

DEBORAH
 AHHHHHH!!!

And she charges with the rest of them, towards the mass of soldiers fighting, and through the smoke Deborah finds a Redcoat and thrusts her bayonet, catching him in the side--

He GRUNTS in pain, then turns and thrusts back at her, but she's quick, and--

She DUCKS as his bayonet goes high, stabbing the air where her head was only a moment before.

Then she thrusts upwards as hard as she can and buries her bayonet in his chest, as blood spurts up her arms and across her face, and he screams--

REDCOAT
 AHHHHHHH!!!

Then he chokes, coughing on blood pooling in his mouth, and as he falls Deborah sees another British soldier running at her, his bayonet held low and levelled at her stomach.

She tries to pull her own bayonet back, but it's stuck in the chest of the man she's just killed.

She flexes and pulls as hard as she can, but it doesn't budge, not an inch, and as the British soldier reaches her--

She abandons her bayonet, dives to the ground, out of the way, as the Redcoat SWINGS, then stands over her, and she's unarmed.

REDCOAT
Treasonous rebel scum.

He's about to stab her, when -- BANG!! -- there's a shot from the distance, and it rips into his shoulder, and he falls.

On the ground, he grits his teeth in pain, and she sees a loose rifle next to her, reaches for it and rips the bayonet from the end, turns with it, and--

... STAB!!!

She buries the entire blade in the man's stomach, and he lets out his death cry as she scrambles to her feet and rips her rifle free from the first corpse.

Then she turns to rejoin the fighting, where she sees a British soldier engaged with a Continental, getting the upper-hand, and she runs to them.

The Redcoat raises his CURVED SWORD, about to bring down a terrible blow, as she thrusts her bayonet deep into his back.

REDCOAT
AHHHHHHH!!!

He FALLS with a scream, as the Continental he was fighting finishes him off, and Deborah turns to survey the action around her.

She sees William, on the other side of the street, as he parries a blow, then stabs a REDCOAT up to his hilt and rips his sword back in a shower of blood.

Then, all the Continentals pause, blood covering faces, and look around the bridge.

There's heavy casualties on both sides, but the bridge is theirs, and so is the battle.

WILLIAM
 (nods)
 Well done, men.

Then, William hears something, and turns to see a not-yet-dead REDCOAT on the bridge, blood pouring from his stomach.

William walks over and looks down -- *the soldier's young, barely even a teenager* -- he turns back and calls to his men--

WILLIAM
 Does anyone here know medicine?

REDCOAT
N-n-n-n-o-o.

He looks back to the young soldier, blood pooling in his mouth, staining his teeth red.

REDCOAT
F-f-f-inish it. P-p-lease.

William sees a rifle, barely out of the boy's reach, and he picks it up.

He hesitates for a moment.

WILLIAM
 Close your eyes.

The boy pauses, looks up at the sky -- *the birds, the trees, clouds floating in blue* -- taking it all in, one last time, then closes his eyes tight and nods.

REDCOAT
A-a-alright.

William aims the rifle.

He waits for a moment, not enjoying this, but knows it has to be done, then grits his teeth as he squeezes, and--

... *BANG!*

The boy's head snaps back, as the explosion pierces the sky, and his body lies still.

William turns back to his soldiers, the musket still in his hand, and makes his decision:

WILLIAM

We'll take the time to bury
everyone that died here today.
Theirs, too. Then we head back
south.

All the soldiers nod, the air heavy around them, as they start to gather the bodies, getting ready to separate them and dig graves.

FADE TO:

THE HUDSON RIVER.

Where Deborah stands up to her ankles in the water, splashing some on her face, scrubbing away the pine tar and blood as best she can.

WILLIAM (O.S.)

Was it worth it?

Deborah turns to see William come to the bank of the river next to her and dip his sword in, rinsing the blood off.

DEBORAH

We won.

He gives her a side-eyed glance, as he wipes the blade clean.

WILLIAM

We would've won whether you were
here or not, so I'll ask you
again... was it worth it?

She looks at him, and then answers with complete honesty, even if not answering the question.

DEBORAH

It all happened quicker than I
thought it would. At least, all
the times that I'd imagined it.

He waits for a long moment, looking at her, then softens a little.

WILLIAM

Some people say it gets easier, but it doesn't. It's the nights that are the worst - not many of us get much sleep anymore.

DEBORAH

So what happens? You just lay there and stare at the ceiling?

WILLIAM

And wait. And then soon enough the next day comes.

He SPLASHES water on his face, wiping off his pine tar, too, starts to take off his clothes, shirt first, then trousers.

He glances at her, sees her watching him.

WILLIAM

Take your clothes off.

DEBORAH

What?

WILLIAM

The next chance for a bath could be weeks.

He's down to his underwear, and he takes that off, too, so he's completely naked.

Then he walks into the river, up to his chest, starts to scrub the dirt and blood from his body, sees her still on the bank.

DEBORAH

I'm not too bad - I'll just splash some on my face.

WILLIAM

What are you talking about? You're filthy.

She looks down at herself, and it's true -- her uniform's ripped and torn, and she's covered head to foot in dirt, blood, pine tar.

She opens her mouth, about to answer, searching for some excuse, then sees something and squints her eyes as she looks into the distance--

DEBORAH

What's that?

WILLIAM
What's what?

Then it comes into the focus.

DEBORAH
(sotto)
Shit...

And it's completely instinctual as Deborah grabs her musket, and starts to sprint.

William spins around, sees her take off, then spots what's caught her attention--

IN THE DISTANCE: there's THREE REDCOATS swimming their horses across the river, almost to the bank, leaving Manhattan and nearly to New Jersey.

WILLIAM
(louder)
Shit...

William quickly pulls his clothes back on, only half-dressed as he starts to run, following after her, as we--

CUT TO:

WITH DEBORAH.

Branches whipping past her face as she sprints and when she gets close to the Redcoats she slows down, making her way quietly through the trees, remaining out of sight as the British ride their horses out of the river.

The two men in front wait as the third man behind catches up, and Deborah quietly brings her musket around, taking aim at the first rider.

She lines him in her sights, knowing how important this first shot is going to be -- hesitates for a moment longer -- then squeezes the trigger, and--

... BANG!!!

The bullet explodes in a cloud of smoke and rips into the Redcoat's chest -- *throws him from his horse* -- dead before he hits the ground.

The other two RIDERS don't know how many men there are, just that it's an ambush, so the first yells to his companion--

REDCOAT
RIDE!!! NOW!!! TO ALBANY!!!

And they both take off, galloping into the woods, as Deborah runs to the man she just shot and picks up his musket.

She sees his horse nearby, and jumps onto its back, starts racing after the two Redcoats, as behind her--

WILLIAM
ROBERT!!!

William runs after her, but he's still too far away, and she doesn't hear him.

CUT TO:

THE FOREST.

Where Deborah lays flat against the horse's back, musket in one hand, reins in the other.

Her horse jumps over a fallen log, and she starts to gain on the Redcoats as she raises her musket, trying to take careful aim from the bouncing back of the horse, taking a moment to line up the shot, then--

... BANG!!!

Another explosion of smoke, but her shot goes wide, and buries into a tree.

The First Redcoat glances over his shoulder, sees that it's only one soldier chasing them, and turns to his companion.

FIRST REDCOAT
There's only one of them! And he's
just fired his only shot.

The Second Redcoat looks, too, and knowing what this means, they both pull their horses to a stop, and turn back to face--

DEBORAH.

Who jerks hard on her reins, and her horse comes to a skidding halt, facing the two Redcoats, deep in a clearing in the New Jersey forest.

FIRST REDCOAT
Only one of you? And you've
already spent your shot...

Deborah looks between them, knows she doesn't stand a chance, so--

She KICKS her horse to a gallop again, heading in the opposite direction, riding through a branch that catches her uniform, ripping a hole across the chest.

The Redcoats carefully take aim as she rides, and then, from behind her--

... *BANG!!!*

She ducks when she hears the explosion, but the shot's low and buries itself deep into her leg--

DEBORAH
Mmmpppphhhh...

She grimaces against the pain and blood spilling from the fleshy part of her upper thigh as the Redcoats start to ride after her.

They're chasing her now, and she's injured, bleeding, and as they start to get closer, closer, closer, the Second Redcoat takes aim with his musket, and--

... *BANG!!!*

Another shot rings out -- rips into the neck of Deborah's horse, as--

Both horse and rider fall, and Deborah's thrown heavily to the ground in a shower of earth, and her wounded leg gets trapped beneath the horse.

She can't move it, pinned under the entire weight of a two thousand pound animal, as the Redcoats ride to her and dismount.

They slowly walk over, and stand above her, sneers on their faces, knowing she's trapped.

FIRST REDCOAT
Well, this certainly makes things easier, doesn't it?

SECOND REDCOAT
If only you'd all die so easily.

And the First Redcoat raises his musket, aims at her head, about to squeeze the trigger, when--

-- she pulls the PISTOL from inside her uniform, the Screw-Barrel she bought in Boston, and squeezes off a round--

... *BANG!!!*

The First Redcoat falls, blood spilling from a dime-sized hole in his forehead.

The Second Redcoat runs over, kicks the pistol from her hand.

SECOND REDCOAT
Treasonous bastard!

He draws his curved sword, raising the blade over his head, sunlight glinting off polished steel.

She has no more tricks left to play, and knows this is going to be the end now.

SECOND REDCOAT
Long live the king.

And just as his lip curls up in hate, about to bring the sword down on her neck--

... *SLICE!!!*

The side of his own neck opens in a shower of blood, cut all the way through to bone.

Then he falls, and Deborah sees William standing behind him, out of breath from the sprint he just made, his Hessian sword stained red again.

WILLIAM
Are you hurt?

DEBORAH
My leg.

William bends down, strains all his muscles as he lifts the horse enough for Deborah to pull her leg out from underneath.

Then, when she does, he sees the blood, and the hole with no exit wound on the other side, where the bullet's still lodged inside her.

WILLIAM
We need to get you to a doctor.

DEBORAH
No.

WILLIAM
It'll get infected with the bullet still in there. Can you walk? I'm sure there'll be one back at the village.

DEBORAH
I can get it out myself.

WILLIAM
What? How?

She looks at the dead Redcoat next to her, then crawls over and rifles through his uniform until she finds what she's looking for--

A flask, in his jacket pocket.

Then, she takes the BAYONET off his musket, and rips her pant leg open even further.

There's blood pooling out of the wound, and the bullet's partially visible, lodged deep in the skin.

She starts guzzling from the flask, then pours some of it over her leg and winces.

WILLIAM
What are you doing?

DEBORAH
Can you press here? It'll stop the bleeding.

WILLIAM
You need to see a bloody doctor!

She pauses, looks up at him, the bayonet in hand, and meets his eyes.

DEBORAH
No. I told you. No doctors.

WILLIAM
Why???

DEBORAH
Just here. On my thigh. Above the bullet hole.

He waits for a moment, then shakes his head as he comes over and applies pressure, and she hands him the flask.

She takes a moment to gather herself, and softly whisper a prayer--

DEBORAH
"Lord, please take my hands and guide them, and bring me strength..."

-- then she sticks the tip of the bayonet into the side of the wound, gritting her teeth in pain.

DEBORAH
Mmppphhh...

William watches as she works, still applying pressure where she told him--

WILLIAM
You need to push the blade in further - underneath the bullet, to wedge it out.

DEBORAH

I'm trying.

She digs deeper into the wound -- *there's more blood, pooling in both of their hands* -- and she screams against the pain--

DEBORAH

AHHHHHH!!!!

And with one big thrust, she finally gets the bayonet tip under the bullet, wedges it out, leaving a hole in her leg as William pours the remaining alcohol from the flask over it.

WILLIAM

We need to stop the bleeding otherwise you're going to pass out.

DEBORAH

I'm fine.

He rips off a piece of his shirt and ties it tightly around her upper leg.

WILLIAM

That'll do for now until we get back - do you think you can walk?

William watches as she stands and takes a few steps, wincing as the leg starts to tighten and stiffen.

WILLIAM

Careful, and don't go too fast, you've lost a lot of blood...

But she doesn't listen, and William looks away, because there's something that's caught his attention, and he walks over to pick up--

The distinct messenger SATCHEL that one of the dead Redcoats is wearing around his neck.

WILLIAM

Can you believe our luck...

But then, just as she takes another step, Deborah stumbles and falls to the ground behind him, and he turns to see her land heavily.

WILLIAM

Dammit, Robert.

He walks over and looks down, sees that she's unconscious and is about to pick her up, but then sees something else, too.

Through her ripped uniform, where it got caught on the branch, there's the frayed end of the cloth she used to bind her breasts flat.

He reaches out and touches it, then looks up to her face, and the structure of it, as he sits back, putting pieces together and trying to process what he's just learned.

FADE TO:

A SMALL FIRE (DUSK).

And Deborah laying beside it, slowly blinking her eyes open and looking around as in the distance the sun sets over the tall Jersey oaks.

She painfully sits up, looking down at her freshly bandaged leg, remembering what happened.

WILLIAM (O.S.)

You really aren't one for following orders, are you?

She whips her head around and sees William walking towards her, his arms full of kindling.

Then she looks down and sees that she's not wearing her uniform, but a different shirt.

WILLIAM

I'm assuming that's why you didn't want a doctor?

She looks back up, meets his eyes, her own pleading with him.

DEBORAH

Please. Don't tell anyone. They'll make me go home.

WILLIAM

Perhaps that's where you should be.

Her eyes flash, as he stands there, studying her, then he shakes his head again.

WILLIAM

How did I not see it before? How could I have been so blind?

DEBORAH

I just want to do my part.

WILLIAM

Yes, but there's *rules* against you doing your part - rules that you once again blatantly disregarded.

DEBORAH

Screw the damn rules! Why should I be told that I can't fight for my country?

WILLIAM

You can fight. There's other ways. Just not...

(searching)

... just not as part of the army, and not dressed as something that you aren't.

DEBORAH

Something that I'm not? What, you mean a soldier? You don't think I'm strong enough, is that it? That I can't hold a musket, like the rest of you, with my weak woman's hands that belong in the kitchen, fetching the Captain's dinners and sewing your uniforms?

(her eyes blaze at him)

Because I'll remind you, Lt. Jaffers, that without me those Redcoats would be half-way to Albany by now, which is something you shouldn't soon forget.

William looks at her, knows that she's right, and it's painful for him, because it's hard to be wrong, and to change.

WILLIAM

What's your name?

DEBORAH

You know my name.

WILLIAM

What's your *real* name.

She meets his eyes.

DEBORAH

Robert Shurtleff is my real name. That's who I am now.

He waits another moment, looking back at her, and it's her eyes that soften him, the passion and the fire.

WILLIAM

It's too dark to keep marching tonight - we'll camp here, and go back to Tarrytown in the morning.

DEBORAH
 And then what? When we rejoin the
 army?

He hesitates for a moment, then looks away, as he tells her--

WILLIAM
 That'll be up to the Captain to
 decide.

And off Deborah's look, none too pleased with this, knowing
 how the Captain's bound to feel about her...

TIME CUT TO:

LATER (NIGHT).

Everything's dark, and the fire's starting to burn low;
 William lays on one side of the flames, and Deborah on the
 other.

He watches as she takes out her cross, silently whispering
 her prayer before sleep.

DEBORAH
 (sotto)
*Our father, who art in heaven,
 hallowed be thy name...*

And as he watches her, through the darkness...

FADE TO:

EXT. TARRYTOWN -- MORNING

Where William and Deborah come back towards Tarrytown, and
 she walks with a noticeable limp now, every step painful for
 her.

*This limp is something that she'll carry with her for the
 rest of her life.*

When they get to the village, they look around to see there's
 no one there -- not any villagers or Continental soldiers.

WILLIAM
 They must have left. I told Scott
 to take the men back south if
 anything happened to me.

DEBORAH
 What does that mean?

WILLIAM

It means that we've got ground to make up - do you think you'll be able to make it with your leg?

They look at each other, and then Deborah nods, defiantly.

DEBORAH

I'll make it.

And then he nods, too, and they begin to walk together, out of the village, heading south.

CUT TO:

EXT. DIRT ROAD -- COUNTRYSIDE -- DAY

William and Deborah continue in silence; she hasn't bound her breasts, and also isn't wearing her hat.

He reaches into his pack and takes out a small loaf of bread, breaks it into two pieces, offers her half.

She takes the bread, and they both chew as they walk, and he looks over at her, thinking about her story.

WILLIAM

How'd you choose Robert Shurtleff?

She's silent for a moment, still chewing, then finally answers.

DEBORAH

It was my brother's first and middle names.

(then; decides to let him
in a little)

He died when he was eight.

WILLIAM

So that was the truth, then? About your eight brothers and how you learned to sew?

DEBORAH

Some of it. I did have eight brothers, and had to learn to mend their clothes.

WILLIAM

And what about the rest?

They keep walking, and it seems like she's not going to answer, until--

DEBORAH

We lived on a farm, and when I was ten, our father left. That's why I had to care for them.

WILLIAM

Left where?

DEBORAH

I don't know. One day he was there, and the next he wasn't, and he never came back.

WILLIAM

So your mother raised you? And your brothers?

DEBORAH

She tried. And she did as best she could. But we lived on a farm that she couldn't tend without a husband, and she had nine young children that needed to be fed.

WILLIAM

So what'd she do?

DEBORAH

She took her time and found a family for each of us, then sold us to them.

He turns to her--

WILLIAM

Sold you? My God, that's awful.

DEBORAH

Is it? What else could she have done? She couldn't make a living on her own without a man, and what man in Massachusetts or anywhere else would want her and her nine children by someone else? You see, this world can be very cruel to women, and that's something I learned when I was very young.

William looks back at her, starting to realize how she's been shaped, and perhaps a small piece of why she is the way that she is.

WILLIAM

So where'd you end up? After she... sold you.

DEBORAH

With a family in Middleborough.
They were good to me - raised me in
their household, and gave me food
and board in exchange for my
service.

WILLIAM

That's where I saw you! I knew you
looked familiar, that first day in
camp.

And a small smile finally crosses her face as she looks back
at him.

DEBORAH

I thought you'd recognized me, and
this was all going to be over
before it even began.

WILLIAM

I can't believe I didn't place you.

DEBORAH

Why would you have? I was someone
else then.

They're quiet now, thinking back to that day, and the reason
why William was at the Thomas' house, and it's sobering.

WILLIAM

They were good friends... both of
them.

DEBORAH

To me, too.

And William gives her another look, perhaps a bit changed,
and they keep walking, in silence now, out of respect for the
dead.

CUT TO:

THE DIRT ROAD (LATER).

Deborah and William are still walking, though it's gotten
dark, and then there's a large clap of THUNDER before the sky
opens above them and the rain pours.

WILLIAM

Shit.

They start to jog, then see a soft light in front of them.

*It's a small farm, in the distance, some ways from the road,
across a field.*

WILLIAM
It's worth a shot.

Deborah nods, as she buttons her jacket to hide her unbound chest, and puts her hat back on so that she looks like a boy again.

CUT TO:

THE FARM (NIGHT).

Where William raises his hand and knocks on the door, until it opens and there's a weathered FARMER on the other side, his WIFE behind him.

WILLIAM
We got caught in the storm. I was wondering if we might be able to stay the night - the barn would be fine, we're just looking for somewhere dry.

The Farmer looks between them--

FARMER
You're soldiers?

WILLIAM
Continental.

Another moment, then the Farmer opens the door a little wider, and motions them in.

FARMER
The barn's for livestock. We've got a spare room inside that you can share.

DEBORAH
Thank you.

Deborah and William walk past, dripping wet and freezing, and go inside--

THE FARM HOUSE.

Where there's two YOUNG BOYS (11 and 7) sitting by a warm fire, and they look up at the two soldiers, now standing in their living room.

FARMER
Why don't you take a seat in front of the fire with the boys and dry off some - we were just about to have some soup.

Deborah and William nod gratefully and go to the fire, the two young ones smiling at the strangers in their home, and William and Deborah smiling back at them.

TIME CUT TO:

LATER.

The Wife's cleared the soup from the table, and picked her boys up and carried them to bed as the Farmer stands with Deborah and William.

FARMER

The one room'll work for the both
of you then?

William looks to Deborah, who meets his eyes, then back to the Farmer--

DEBORAH

Of course. It'll be more than
enough.

The Farmer nods, and they follow him across the house, to where he opens the door to--

A SMALL BEDROOM.

Where Deborah and William walk in to see a large GADSDEN FLAG pinned to the wall: a coiled snake, ready to strike, and the timeless words of revolution underneath:

"DON' T TREAD ON ME"

They both see the way the room's decorated, and know what it means, as Deborah turns back to the Farmer, sees the grief in his eyes.

FARMER

Bunker Hill. He'd just turned
sixteen.

DEBORAH

I'm sorry.

FARMER

So have we been.

A moment longer, then the Farmer nods, and walks to the door--

FARMER

I'll see you in the morning.

When he's gone, Deborah and William look at the single bed, and the candle flickering on the night stand.

Then William clears his throat, sets his things on a chair:

WILLIAM
I'll take the floor.

Deborah nods, as she goes to the far side of the bed and turns her back as she strips down, taking her shirt off, then the rest of her damp clothes.

Behind her, William unbuckles his sword, then does the same thing, taking his clothes off, and carefully folding them.

Shadows and light still flicker across the wall, as she crawls under the blankets, and William lays on the floor.

Then, William looks up, sees Deborah holding her cross, silently whispering her nightly prayer, as she always does, and he asks her--

WILLIAM
You've read a lot of the Bible?

She pauses.

DEBORAH
I have.

WILLIAM
And what does it tell you?

DEBORAH
A great many things, I suppose.

WILLIAM
Like what?

She thinks about that, for a moment, staring at the ceiling.

DEBORAH
That we come from nothing, and
before long we'll return to
nothing, but while we're here...
(beat)
... while we're here, we have the
chance to do great things.

He takes that in, thinking about it, then--

WILLIAM
Will you say it again, but out loud
this time? So that I can hear,
too?

She pauses for a moment, then looks down at him, meets his eyes -- a *connection between them* -- then she nods, and continues.

DEBORAH

*Now the light has gone away, my
Savior; so please listen while we
pray.*

He closes his eyes, and his entire body seems to relax.

DEBORAH

*We ask thee to watch and keep us,
and send us to a quiet sleep, in
your arms, the same as we ask of
you every night...*

And as she continues, and the candle burns lower, he begins to drift off to sleep, for the first time in a long time, as we...

FADE TO:

THE MORNING.

Where William blinks the sleep from his eyes, and then opens them to light pouring into the room, and the sound of voices in the kitchen.

CUT TO:

INT. FARM HOUSE -- MORNING

William walks out, fully dressed, and sees Deborah fully dressed, too; chest bound, hat on, passing convincingly as a man as she speaks with the Farmer and his Wife.

WILLIAM

What time is it? I can't believe I
slept that long.

WIFE

It means that you needed it.

He turns and meets Deborah's eyes, something unspoken passing between them as they walk towards the door together, and turn back to the Farmer.

DEBORAH

Thank you. For your hospitality.

The Farmer pauses, looks at his sons, playing on the floor, then back to the two soldiers, and he meets their eyes.

FARMER

Finish this. Before they ride off,
like their brother did...

And all Deborah and William can do is nod, then shake hands, great emotion in their eyes, as they leave to continue on their way.

CUT TO:

THE DIRT ROAD.

Outside the Farmer's house, where William and Deborah start into the distance, away from the farm, past half-tended cotton fields on either side.

Then, there's a noise behind them, and they quickly turn, on full alert, and relax when they see--

It's the Farmer's oldest son, running towards them, and as he gets closer they see that he's carrying something, which he reaches out and hands to Deborah.

And there's a moment between them, his young eyes meeting hers, then he steps back and crisply salutes them, as best he knows how, before he turns and runs back towards the farm.

When he's gone, Deborah and William look down to see the GADSDEN FLAG that hung in his brother's room, and they stare at it: the coiled snake, the word's underneath it, emotion rising in their throats.

WILLIAM

Is there any family that won't be touched by this war?

Deborah looks up at the boy, running back along the road, into the distance.

DEBORAH

That's why we have to keep going.

They watch him for a moment longer, then turn and start walking again, heading further south.

CUT TO:

EXT. DIRT ROAD -- COUNTRYSIDE -- AFTERNOON

Deborah and William keep walking, neither speaking, until the road soon comes to a hill which they crest, and when they look below, they pause.

On the other side is a wide and grass-filled valley where the whole CONTINENTAL ARMY is camped.

CUT TO:

EXT. TENTS -- MILITARY ENCAMPMENT -- DAY

William and Deborah walk through the rows of tents, until they see some of the soldiers they fought with at Tarrytown.

Scott's in the middle of them, looks up from a mug of beer.

SCOTT
Where the hell have you two been?
We waited hours.

WILLIAM
Just found some last Redcoats that
needed to be killed.

SCOTT
Yeah, and my mother's the Queen of
England.

Scott makes the "jerk-off" motion with his hand as he laughs, and Deborah and William smile, too, as William leads her past them.

DEBORAH
Where are we going?

They walk a few more paces, then he nods to the Captain's tent, in front of them.

WILLIAM
Captain Webb will want to know that
his aide-de-camp has returned.

Deborah's face falls, because she knows what this is sure to mean for her.

DEBORAH
So this is the end.

And William hesitates, when he hears that, and looks back at her with a look that she can't quite place.

WILLIAM
Can I ask you something? And I
want you to tell me the truth.

DEBORAH
Alright.

WILLIAM
Why?

DEBORAH
It's not enough that I just wanted
to do my part?

He gazes impassively back at her, he wants more, and she knows it.

So she thinks about it further, taking her time, then meets his eyes, and answers with complete honesty--

DEBORAH

My whole life, in everything I've done, I was always told, "*be seen and not heard*," same as you told me my job was, that first day in camp.

(then)

Well, for once, I wanted to be heard.

He looks back at her, for just another moment, then pushes the flap open, and they go inside.

CAPTAIN WEBB (PRE-LAP)

Well, if that wasn't the longest coffee run in the history of fucking coffee and runs, then I don't know my own name.

CUT TO:

INT. CAPTAIN'S TENT -- MILITARY ENCAMPMENT -- DAY

Deborah and William stand at attention, with Captain Webb in front of them, glaring at Deborah as she keeps her eyes straight ahead.

DEBORAH

I'm sorry, sir.

CAPTAIN WEBB

You're sorry? That's the best you can do? I should have you court-martialed for not being able to tell a passable lie alone, much less desertion.

DEBORAH

Desertion?

CAPTAIN WEBB

You left your post - do you know another word for it?

Her eyes blaze--

DEBORAH

I fought, I was--

WILLIAM

It was my fault, sir.

Captain Webb turns to look at William, as he steps forward, interrupting.

CAPTAIN WEBB
Is that right?

William hesitates for a moment, then looks to Deborah, who's watching him, and it's her eyes that convince him to keep going.

WILLIAM
I told Private Shurtleff to come with me to Tarrytown - I didn't realize it was contradicting your own orders, and I needed as many soldiers as possible.

CAPTAIN WEBB
And you didn't care enough to set him right, did you, Shurtleff?

WILLIAM
No. He didn't. And that's his fault. But if he had, it would have all been for nothing.

CAPTAIN WEBB
What do you mean?

WILLIAM
Without him we wouldn't have intercepted these.

William reaches into his uniform and pulls out the MESSENGER SATCHEL the Redcoat was carrying, hands it to Captain Webb.

WILLIAM
We thought all the Redcoats were dead, and it was Robert that saw the last three crossing the river and he chased them down and stopped them himself.

Captain Webb takes the dispatches, quickly starts scanning through the pages.

DEBORAH
I caught them, but they disarmed me and shot my horse out from underneath - I was all but finished until William caught up and finished them off while I was on the ground.

CAPTAIN WEBB
Well, aren't you both just the picture of teamwork.

The Captain looks back up at Deborah, and she holds her breath, knowing that everything's about to be decided.

CAPTAIN WEBB

I took a new aide-de-camp while you were gone, so the job's filled.

(then)

But I'm not in the business of sending soldiers home during a war in which we're out-manned, and currently losing, so since you two work together so well, you can join Lieutenant Jaffers' company and be his problem now.

Deborah's almost moved to tears, as she salutes, with a shaking hand--

DEBORAH

Thank you, sir...

CAPTAIN WEBB

Now get the hell out of here, both of you.

They spin on their heels, and head towards the exit, when Captain Webb speaks up behind them.

CAPTAIN WEBB

Oh, and Private Shurtleff...

They turn back and meet the Captain's eye.

CAPTAIN WEBB

One more time directly disobeying my orders and you will be court-martialed faster than you can blink. Do you understand me?

A moment, then Deborah nods, and they leave, as the Captain goes to his desk, reading back through the dispatches that William brought.

CUT TO:

A ROARING BONFIRE.

In the middle of the Continental camp, and all the men gathered around it.

There's drinking, strings and fiddles being played, men clapping as a few dance a jig, and they all laugh together.

William sits next to Scott, a smile on his face as Scott tells a joke and slaps him on the back, then William looks across the fire to where Deborah sits by herself.

He keeps talking with Scott, but his eyes drift back to her, the flames between them, and something builds, too strong for either to ignore, and she walks over.

WILLIAM
What is it?

DEBORAH
I wanted to say thank you.

He stands and leads her away from the men, so that they won't be heard.

WILLIAM
For what?

DEBORAH
Earlier. With the Captain.

He looks back at her, his face giving away nothing.

WILLIAM
I don't know what you mean.

Scott yells behind him--

SCOTT (O.S.)
Jaffers! Are you still drinking
like a woman, or do you need
another pint?

William looks back to see Scott gesturing to his empty beer mug.

WILLIAM
I'm fine.

SCOTT
Drinking like a woman it is, then.

Scott laughs, then goes to refill his mug, joking with the men next to him, the fiddles playing faster.

DEBORAH
Come with me.

WILLIAM
Where?

DEBORAH
There's something I want to show
you.

And without anything further, or waiting for him to respond, she turns and walks away.

He hesitates, looks around for a moment, back at Scott and the men who are occupied with their jokes, and their beer, none of them watching, so he follows after her.

She makes her way between the tents, towards the edge of camp and the large field beyond, her path lit by the full moon above, as they come to--

THE FOREST.

Where she starts to move between the trees, the sound of the music and men at camp distant now, no more voices, just the low, rhythmic beating of the drums, and the echo of strings, and he calls to her.

WILLIAM

Where are you going? There's nothing out here.

DEBORAH

I know.

And she turns, as they stand facing each other, in the moonlight, between the tall oaks reaching up towards the heavens, and the light above.

And he understands.

WILLIAM

I've...
(a beat; he swallows,
nervous)
I've never done it before.

DEBORAH

Neither have I.

She walks closer to him, so that they're nearly touching, and can feel each other breathing, chests rising and falling, together.

WILLIAM

Are you sure?

DEBORAH

I've never been more sure in my life.

And there's one more moment, and his eyes tell her that he wants this, too, and then they start to kiss, lips pressed together, as they awkwardly pull at their clothes.

Once they've taken them off, and they're both naked, he piles the clothes together to create a make-shift bed, and gently lays her down.

He moves on top of her, his hand on her cheek, caressing her, as they continue to kiss, the only thing in the world that matters right now.

And then he pauses. Looking down at her. Deep into her eyes.

DEBORAH
What's the matter?

Another moment, then he smiles.

WILLIAM
Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

And then she smiles, too, as they begin to make love, in the clearing, under the tall oak trees, lit by nothing but the light of the moon above.

FADE TO:

EXT. CONTINENTAL ENCAMPMENT -- DAWN

The sun rises in the distance, as a long HORN sounds, and two figures hurry from the forest back across a field towards the camp.

CUT TO:

INT. TENT -- MILITARY ENCAMPMENT -- DAWN

William and Deborah are dressed again, in the tent that they share in the Continental encampment, hurrying to pack up all their belongings.

The horn sounds again in the distance.

WILLIAM
The second one's the signal to march.

Deborah nods, and is just about to walk outside when William grabs her and pulls her back behind the flap.

He moves so that no one can see them, and kisses her again, then looks deep into her eyes.

WILLIAM
I'm glad that I met you. For the second time.

DEBORAH
Sometimes our lives happen in the strangest of ways, don't they?

There's another moment between them, then she smiles, and he smiles, too, as they both press their uniforms flat and walk outside to join the army.

CUT TO:

EXT. DIRT ROAD -- COUNTRYSIDE -- DAY

The Continental Army continues its march; they're in Virginia now, the heat sweltering as they get further south, chest-high cornfields on either side of the road.

William walks with Scott, though he keeps stealing looks towards Deborah, a few paces ahead of them.

She's wiping sweat from her brow, still with that slight limp that she'll never quite get rid off, and then she hears a soft bird call.

Behind her, Scott glances around, pausing for a moment, a curious look on his face, then he breaks ranks and sprints into the cornfield.

WILLIAM

Scott!! Where the hell are you going?

William waits, but there's no answer, and Scott doesn't come back.

The SOLDIER next to them grins--

CONTINENTAL SOLDIER

Must've been something he ate.

WILLIAM

We all had the same breakfast.

They keep marching, and Deborah keeps staring at the cornfield, something doesn't seem right to her, then another bird call.

DEBORAH

What was that?

CONTINENTAL SOLDIER

Owl?

DEBORAH

... during the day?

The Soldier shrugs his shoulders, about to answer, when--

... BANG, BANG!!

Two shots ring out, the Soldier falls dead, a hole in his chest, and the second bullet rips through a different soldier's neck.

There's confusion everywhere, muskets swinging up, ready to fire, but there's no one to fire at, just stalks of corn.

Deborah's first reaction is to turn and look at William, and he opens his mouth, too, just about to say something, and as soon as he does--

... BANG, BANG, BANG!!!

A volley explodes from the cornfields on either side in a haze of smoke and deafening noise.

Musket balls fly towards the Continental Army, and one rips through William's skull -- *exploding bone and brain* -- and he collapses to the ground.

DEBORAH

NO!!!!

A GROUP of plainclothes SOLDIERS jump from where they've been hiding in the cornfields and continue shooting as the Continentals scramble to return fire against this faction of LOYALIST AMERICANS.

Deborah runs through all the chaos and falls to her knees next to William.

DEBORAH

William?????

But his eyes are already glazed in death, a look of surprise in them, his skull blood-filled and broken, his last words left unsaid.

That's how quickly death can happen.

She stares down at him, a knot rising in her throat, not wanting to believe what her eyes are showing her, then in the distance...

... a BATTLE CRY.

LOYALISTS

AHHHHHHHHH!!!!

And the Loyalists begin to CHARGE, from either side of the road, running out of the cornfields, and it's soon going to be hand-to-hand combat.

Somewhere in the distance, over the noise of battle, the Captain yells--

CAPTAIN WEBB
 ... *BAYONETS!!!*

And the Continentals swings their bayonets up, just as the Loyalists crash into their lines with a loud crack, and the fighting turns bloody.

Deborah's holding William's body when she sees THREE LOYALISTS charging at her, BAYONETS levelled, and she grabs her musket, quickly aims, and--

... *BANG!*

She fires a shot, and the first one goes down, but the other two keep coming -- she drops the musket, reaches into her uniform and pulls her pistol, quickly aims again, and--

... *BANG!*

The second one goes down -- *she's become a good shot* -- but the third keeps charging, almost to her, his mouth open wide in his battle scream.

LOYALIST SOLDIER
 ... *AHHHHHH!!!!*

She looks around in panic, sees William's Hessian sword and rips it from its sheath, turns to face her attacker, just as he--

... *THRUSTS!!*

And she jumps out of the way of the bayonet, then SWINGS the sword, but he parries, turns around, and -- *THRUSTS again* -- but she dodges, then--

... *SLICE!*

She cuts him across the back of the legs, and he SCREAMS as he falls to his knees, drops his musket, clutching at his severed hamstrings.

She stands in front of him, the bloody Hessian sword at her side, and he's defenseless -- she breathes heavily, chest rising and falling, then--

SHE HACKS BRUTALLY INTO HIS NECK.

Blood spurts up her arms, as his body slumps to the ground, broken and dead.

She stands there for a moment, looking down at him, then back up, searching through the chaos of the battle, until she finds--

TATUM SCOTT.

He's across the fighting from her, stabbing his bayonet into the back of a Continental Soldier, a man that only a few minutes ago was his brother.

She starts to walk towards him, intent on revenge, the battle still raging all around, but she only has eyes for this traitor, when--

... *BANG!*

She gasps in surprise as she's thrown from her feet by a MUSKET BALL that buries itself deep into her right shoulder.

DEBORAH

Mmmppphhh.

She lands heavily, grunting as pain shoots through her body, and her vision distorts for a moment as she looks to her shoulder, sees the blood spilling from the fresh wound.

Then, in the distance, she sees the silhouette of Scott, as he starts to retreat back towards the cornfields.

DEBORAH

No...

She knows her chance for revenge is slipping away as she tries to struggle to her feet, to go after him, but there's a LOYALIST SOLDIER running straight towards her.

LOYALIST

Ahhhhh!!!

She scrambles to defend herself, tries to bring the Hessian sword up, but it's too late, and he swings the blunt end of his rifle, and--

... *THWACK!!*

-- as soon as the butt strikes her face, her head snaps back, and everything goes--

SLAM TO:

BLACK.

And silence. No more sounds of battle. Everything's calm, tranquil.

Then, a beating heart, soft at first, then louder. Voices in the distance. The harsh intake of breath, and a gulp of air, which--

SLAMS TO:

A HOSPITAL TENT.

Where Deborah sits up in bed, looking around, trying to orient herself; there's rows of beds next to her, filled with wounded soldiers.

And then she sees William's Hessian sword, propped against a chair, and the memory of what happened floods back, along with the pain.

CAPTAIN WEBB (O.S.)

You're awake.

She turns to see Captain Webb walking towards her, from where he'd just been speaking with another wounded soldier in a bed further down.

She swallows when she sees him coming, and looks down to see that she's dressed in a hospital gown now, which means that he knows her secret.

When he reaches her, he nods to the Hessian sword, on the chair next to her bed.

CAPTAIN WEBB

They found it in your hand when they carried you here - they tried to take it away but couldn't unwrap your fingers from the handle.

Deborah's silent for a moment. Looking down. Then back up to the Captain's eyes.

DEBORAH

They weren't Redcoats. Who were they?

CAPTAIN WEBB

Loyalists. True-blooded Americans who've turned their backs on their country to fight in exchange for money - the lowest and most pathetic cowards, and the worst kind of men.

DEBORAH

We were marching, and everything was fine, and... it all happened so quickly.

CAPTAIN WEBB

War too often does.

DEBORAH

And Scott?

CAPTAIN WEBB

I suspect he'd been planning it for awhile now, or something similar, and I'm sure he's a much richer man for it.

DEBORAH

He escaped?

CAPTAIN WEBB

Back into the fields, to rejoin with the British, I'm afraid.

She takes that in, then looks over at William's sword again, next to her bed, and the Captain does, too.

CAPTAIN WEBB

It'll be strange not seeing it at his side.

(then)

He'd been with me since Breed's Hill.

And she realizes, shaking her head, as the tears start coming again...

DEBORAH

(softly)

I didn't know anything about him.

She keeps looking at the sword, living with William's memory for a little while longer, while it's still close, and he's still all around.

Then, she turns back to the Captain, scared of his answer, but knowing that she has to ask--

DEBORAH

What happens now?

CAPTAIN WEBB

You're going to have be a little more specific than that, I'm afraid.

She looks down at the way that she's dressed, her unbound breasts, the fact that she's clearly and plainly a woman.

CAPTAIN WEBB

What? Do you think the doctors told me something that I didn't already know? I have two daughters at home, and I've never once confused them with my sons. And besides... you have no apple beneath your chin.

DEBORAH

You... knew? Then... why... you
could have--

His eyes flash as he looks at her -- this is something that
he, too, believes in his soul.

CAPTAIN WEBB

I could have done a great many
things, that's true, but in the
end, I'm just a man, so who am I to
tell someone they aren't able to
fight for their own freedom?

(he leans closer; truly,
deeply feels this)

Who we are, and what we're capable
of, is something that comes
directly from God, and that's
exactly what we're fighting to
protect, isn't it?

She swallows back her emotion.

DEBORAH

Sir...

CAPTAIN WEBB

We're in Virginia now, and almost
to Yorktown. The Loyalists have
delayed us longer than we would've
liked, as I'm sure was their
intent, because the siege has
already begun.

(beat)

So get your rest, because I'm going
to need every soldier available to
me if we're going to stand a chance
of defeating the British once and
for all.

He turns and starts to walk away, as she chokes back her
emotion--

DEBORAH

Captain...?

He pauses, turns back.

DEBORAH

You didn't ask me my name.

CAPTAIN WEBB

You told me you were called Robert,
the first time that we met, isn't
that right?

DEBORAH

Yes, sir.

CAPTAIN WEBB

Then Robert's what you'll be called.

And with that, and nothing more, Captain Webb turns and leaves, tears welling in Deborah's eyes, and emotion rising in her throat, as we....

FADE TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD -- VIRGINIA -- MORNING

The sun rises over the entire Continental Army, Captain Webb's troops linked with General Washington's army, and they're camped on a low hill, above a city on the banks of a wide river, and beyond that, in the distance, the mouth of the great Chesapeake Bay.

SUPER: Yorktown, Virginia -- October 14th, 1781.

There's a fleet of BRITISH SHIPS in the river, and further out, in the Chesapeake, a larger fleet of FRENCH WAR SHIPS, blocking them in.

CUT TO:

EXT. AMERICAN LINES -- YORKTOWN -- DAY

CANNON FIRE explodes in the distance, American artillery keeping the British pinned in the fort, and the British returning mortars, Webb's regiment watching the explosions from a distance.

Then, from behind them, Deborah walks from the tents, her limp more pronounced, bruises covering her face, and they all turn to look at her.

Her hair's gotten longer, her breasts aren't bound, she's dressed as a woman.

They take her in, and realize that she's a female soldier among them, with a Hessian sword buckled at her hip, and a musket in her hand.

But they've all seen her. And they know her bravery. And that she's one of them.

And so a SOLDIER nods. And then another. And then all of them do, as she takes her place among their ranks, just another revolutionary and patriot fighting to make a new world.

And then, in the distance--

A WHITE HORSE.

And we follow with it, as it rides through the Continentals, a twenty-four year old CONTINENTAL OFFICER on its back, until it gets to Captain Webb's troops, and the Officer dismounts.

This is ALEXANDER HAMILTON, who was 24 when he fought with the Massachusetts 4th Regiment at Yorktown, a tall man, with a proud chin and sharp eyes.

HAMILTON

Captain Webb. The General sends his greetings, and he has your orders.

CAPTAIN WEBB

What would he command us to do?

Hamilton turns and looks at all the soldiers watching, their weary and dirt-stained faces, but the looks of pride still in their eyes, and deep in their souls.

And then he sees Deborah, a woman among these men, and holds her eyes for a long moment -- *is he going to say something to her?*

But instead he smiles, and his eyes twinkle, as he turns back to Captain Webb.

HAMILTON

The General's going to attack at nightfall, with the main army, and the French forces, too, at the north side of the fort.

CAPTAIN WEBB

And we're to join him?

HAMILTON

No. His attack is going to be a diversion. He'll draw the British defenses to the north, and then we're to attack from this side, your forces and mine, from the south.

A moment, as Captain Webb looks at the south side of the fort, in the distance, then turns back to Hamilton, and he nods.

CAPTAIN WEBB

You do us honor.

HAMILTON

Ready your soldiers, Captain,
because this war is going to end
tonight...

(then; with a devilish
grin)

... which means America begins
tomorrow.

Then Hamilton climbs back onto his horse, kicks it to a gallop, riding back the way he came, towards the main Continental Army.

And as Deborah follows him with her eyes, watching as he rides into the distance, readying herself for what's to come...

DEBORAH (PRE-LAP)

*You make me strong, and you're my
bedrock, firm and solid beneath my
feet...*

CUT TO:

CONTINENTAL TRENCHES (NIGHT).

A deep and long bunker dug into the field 150 yards from the walls of Yorktown.

It's nighttime, and the Continental soldiers are all here, their faces illuminated by flickering light from exploding mortars in the distance.

DEBORAH (O.S.)

*You're the castle in which I live;
and you're my saviour and rescuing
knight, alive in my heart...*

Webb's at the front of his men, while further down Hamilton waits with his company.

DEBORAH

*I receive your courage, because
your courage is best. I receive
your strength, because your
strength is strongest. Give us
back our wings today, and let us
fly...*

She finishes the prayer, then tucks her cross back beneath her uniform, one more time, and looks down at the Hessian sword at her hip.

She stares at it, remembering William, then--

CONTINENTAL SOLDIER (O.S.)
 It's good that you brought it -
 he'd want it here on the
 battlefield.

She turns to look at the Continental soldier next to her,
 watching as she looks down at the sword.

Then he sees her hand, at her side now, shaking as she tries
 to flex the tremor out of it.

CONTINENTAL SOLDIER
 I felt the same way this morning.

DEBORAH
 The same as what?

CONTINENTAL SOLDIER
 That today might be the day we're
 asked to give everything. And I'm
 scared of dying, the same as all of
 us are, I suspect. But then I
 realized I'm only scared of dying
 in every way a man might die,
 except for one.

She meets his eyes--

DEBORAH
 And what way's that?

CONTINENTAL SOLDIER
 For my country.

They stand there looking at each other for a moment, then --
BOOM, BOOM, BOOM -- explosions rock the north end of the
 fort.

Webb peers over the top, and watches as the French and
 Continental Armies launch their false offensive against the
 main British forces.

Then he comes back down into the trench, and turns to his
 soldiers, looks each of them in the eye as he addresses them.

CAPTAIN WEBB
 I've fought with many of you for a
 long time now. We've marched
 together. We've bled together.
 We've buried our brothers together.
 And I couldn't be prouder to be
 your Captain.

He looks among his men, tears welling in eyes, as they stand
 tall together.

There's more EXPLOSIONS in the distance, increasing in frequency.

CAPTAIN WEBB

There's a storm inside all of us...
inside every soul that's been born
into this land that we now fight to
call our own. And some of us will
be wounded. Some of us will never
leave this battlefield again once
the bloody dawn finally comes...
but how few in history have been
given an opportunity such as the
one that we now have before us?

(stronger; steel in his
voice)

And before we leave this trench,
and go over these walls, together,
as countrymen - *and as Americans* -
even though many of us might die
here tonight, first...

He finds Deborah among the soldiers. Meets her eyes. It's her that's taught him this.

CAPTAIN WEBB

... first we're going to live.

His soldiers look back at him, with love and pride, and they nod, as one of them says:

CONTINENTAL SOLDIER

Don't tread on me.

And the rest take it up, too, Deborah with them: "*Don't tread on me, don't tread on me, don't tread on me.*"

The words are on everyone's lips, passing between them, as further down the trench Hamilton raises his sword high in the air.

HAMILTON

Revolutionaries!

They all turn to look at him -- every eye in the trench watching.

HAMILTON

*For our freedom, and for America,
born here tonight on this
battlefield...*

Then he brings his sword down and yells as loud as he's ever yelled--

HAMILTON

... *CHARGE!!!*

And then with their own battle cries, lifting up above them, the American soldiers pour over the walls of the trench, and onto--

THE BATTLEFIELD.

Where they charge as one towards the fort in the distance, Deborah struggling to keep up, with her limp and wounded leg.

BANG, BANG, BANG!!!

Musket fire pierces the night sky now as the Americans keep running, then--

... KABOOM, KABOOM!!!

Artillery shells explode around them, giant craters on the battlefield, and death comes as limbs are severed from bodies, then--

... KABOOM, KABOOM!!!

Shells coming from the Continental lines are lobbed at the fort -- *huge holes blown in the walls as the mortars find their targets* -- just as the first wave of Americans get to the outer defenses, and start to scale the hastily made six foot fortifications.

Deborah's still lagging behind when the first Continental soldiers reach the redoubts, and start to climb up and over them.

Hamilton's leading the assault, and as soon as he and his men get to the top, they jump over, and drop down inside--

THE FORT.

Where they fire as soon as their feet hit the ground -- *BANG, BANG, BANG!!!* -- quickly taking out the British soldiers defending the wall, though one YOUNG REDCOAT slips away through the buildings.

And as Hamilton and his men kill a few more not-yet-dead Redcoats, they turn and start to fight their way to the sparsely defended southern gate.

HAMILTON
*GET THE GATE OPEN!!! LET THE REST
INSIDE!!!*

And Hamilton's men kill the last few Redcoats as they reach the gate, and push the large doors open, as we go--

BACK TO:

THE BATTLEFIELD.

Where more shells explode with deafening thunder, and more Continentals fall, and then Webb sees the gates opening and yells at the top of his lungs--

CAPTAIN WEBB
MASSACHUSETTS!! THIS WAY!!

And as he leads his soldiers forward, through the gunfire and mortars and past the failing redoubts, Continentals pouring into Yorktown, Deborah among them--

CUT TO:

EXT. YORKTOWN -- NORTH SIDE -- NIGHT

The far side of the fort, where we find Lord Cornwallis with his Commanders around him, giving orders for the defense of the northern battlements.

The British forces are being SHELLED by French artillery, then a mortar blows a HUGE HOLE in the fortifications, and Cornwallis yells--

LORD CORNWALLIS
 More men down to the breach! *NOW!!*
 Defend the fortifications with
 everything that we have!

The Commander and a few other men scramble to follow their orders, as Cornwallis takes out his SPYGLASS.

He looks at the area where the American and French Commanders are, behind their lines, and sees the distinct outline of a figure that could very well be George Washington, silhouetted by smoke and flames.

LORD CORNWALLIS
 (sotto)
 What's your move, Washington?
 What's your game?

And then, as Cornwallis puts the spyglass away, someone calls from the distance--

YOUNG REDCOAT
 Lord Cornwallis!

The Young Redcoat that we saw fleeing from the southern garrison runs to him, his face covered in dirt and blood, he even forgets to bow.

LORD CORNWALLIS
 What is it?

YOUNG REDCOAT
The Continentals, sir - they've
breached the south end of the fort.

LORD CORNWALLIS
That's not possible.

YOUNG REDCOAT
It is, sir. I've seen it. They're
inside the walls.

Cornwallis spins around, brings the SPYGLASS back and puts it to his eye to see the American forces, led by Hamilton and Webb, breaching the redoubts, and pouring inside the southern gate.

He's breathless for a moment, knowing what this means, then turns back--

LORD CORNWALLIS
Who's your Commander?

YOUNG REDCOAT
O'Hara, sir.

LORD CORNWALLIS
Find him and tell him to take his
company and defend the south end of
the fort.

The Young Redcoat salutes, then runs off towards the fighting, to do as Cornwallis has commanded, and as Cornwallis turns back--

CUT TO:

THE SOUTHERN END (YORKTOWN).

Where American soldiers fire their muskets at the token British Garrison that's left, and the Redcoats in front of them fall, bullets piercing flesh, and among the Continental ranks we find Deborah.

She takes aim, a British soldier in her sights, pulls the trigger, and there's an explosion from her musket as the Redcoat dies.

She runs to him, grabs his already-loaded musket as she slings her own discharged rifle over her shoulder for later, then sees Captain Webb at the front of their company, leading them personally.

BANG, BANG, BANG!!!

He fires, with his soldiers, and more American bullets tear through British flesh, and then the resistance is all but gone.

Hamilton's at the front of everyone, and he turns and looks further into the fort, through the buildings, and his eyes go wide, as he yells--

HAMILTON
*REFORM!!! REFORM!!! EVERYONE BACK
 TOGETHER!!!*

Then Deborah sees it, too -- the Young Redcoat, and General O'Hara, jogging towards them with a massive company of British reinforcements.

And with General O'Hara's troops the British now outnumber the Continentals two to one.

HAMILTON
ON MY COMMAND!!!

But even with these odds, the Americans will still fight, with everything they have in them, as Hamilton draws a sword and raises it high in the air.

HAMILTON
READY!!!

All the American soldiers form a line, some reloading, Deborah among the ones standing at the back, behind a line kneeling in front, and there's a soldier next to her from Hamilton's company.

HAMILTON
AIM!!!

He glances at her, and she looks like a girl now, not bothering to hide it anymore.

He's about to open his mouth, then sees the look in her eyes, the fire -- *and she nods* -- and he waits a moment, then he nods, too.

They turn back and aim together at the British that are forming in front of them, as Hamilton yells--

HAMILTON
... FIRE!!!

BILLOWS OF SMOKE, AND -- *BANG, BANG, BANG!!!* -- AMERICAN BULLETS TEAR THROUGH THE BRITISH SOLDIERS, AND A SCORE OF THEM FALL, DEAD.

But the rest are still very much alive.

GENERAL O'HARA

READY!!!

Deborah watches as across from them, GENERAL O'HARA raises his own sword, and--

GENERAL O'HARA

FIRE!!!

The most horrifying moment of a soldier's life -- to stand stationary as a wall of bullets flies at your body and there's nothing to do except pray.

... THUMP, THUMP, THUMP.

British bullets find their targets, and the two men on either side of Deborah fall, but she's spared.

HAMILTON

BAYONETS!!!

Deborah looks around, and sees the dead men next to her, and the dead men in front of her, then Captain Webb picks up Hamilton's cry--

CAPTAIN WEBB

*BAYONETS!!! MASSACHUSETTS MEN,
BAYONETS!!!*

There's a few more shots -- *BANG, BANG!!* -- two more Americans fall, then--

HAMILTON

CHARGE!!!

The Americans scream their battle cries, then charge towards the British across from them -- *bayonets levelled* -- and Deborah raises the Hessian sword, as she charges and screams with them--

DEBORAH

AHHHHHHHHH!!!

The British brace themselves for impact, as General O'Hara moves towards the back of his men, so that he doesn't see any of the action, contrary to Hamilton and Webb who are leading the American charge themselves, and are the first men to slam into--

THE BRITISH LINES.

Where the two sides meet in a dizzying clash of upended bodies and both sides start to hack and slice with blades and bayonets.

GENERAL O'HARA
STAND STRONG!!! STAND STRONG!!!
GIVE NO QUARTER!!!

And when the British hear their commander, they gather themselves, and begin to fight back against the Continental surge.

Deborah is caught in the mass of bodies, and then they part and she finds herself face to face with a British soldier, as he SWINGS--

... SLICE!!!

-- and she JUMPS out of the way, and his blade goes wide as he pulls his sword back around, one more swing at her head, and she PARRIES.

Then she backs up, both breathing heavy as they take the measure of the other, and he cocks his head to the side, a mocking smile on his face when he sees who it is that he's fighting--

BRITISH SOLDIER
... a girl???

And then Deborah CHARGES -- *SWINGS at his head* -- and he ducks, hits her in the face with the butt of his weapon, and she stumbles backwards.

BRITISH SOLDIER
 If you bloody Rebels are enlisting
 your kitchen maids, then things
 must really be desperate.

Deborah wipes the blood from her nose, as she looks up at him with murder in her eyes, and they begin to circle each other.

She's focused, and then CHARGES -- SWINGS, and he PARRIES -- then she feigns going low, slicing at his legs, and when he tries to parry, she spins, and he brings his blade up, but it's too late, as--

SHE STABS HIM IN THE HEART.

The Hessian sword pierces all the way through his chest and protrudes from his back, and his eyes go wide as he looks down at his death.

DEBORAH
 Not bad for a kitchen maid, eh?

And then Deborah rips the sword out, and the British soldier's body falls.

She looks back to the fighting, and sees a British soldier reloading his musket, packing bullet and powder, and as he raises the barrel, aims at her--

... *BANG!!!*

He fires as Deborah dives out of the way, and the shot goes wide, but she's off-balance, and he charges--

BRITISH SOLDIER

AHHHH!!!

And she tries to defend herself, but he swings his musket, knocks the sword from her hands, then slams the barrel into her midsection, and she falls.

DEBORAH

Mmmpphhhh.

She's sprawled in the dirt, and looks up, his bayonet raised over her head, about to come down and end her life, as she reaches inside her uniform, pulls out her pistol, and--

... *BANG!!!*

The soldier falls with a bullet in his chest, and she stands and picks her sword up, runs him through for good measure, then turns to see--

Another SOLDIER.

Who sprints at her, his bayonet levelled, and in one neat move she swipes it away, then slashes him across the back of the legs.

BRITISH SOLDIER

AHHHHHH!!!

He falls in pain, grabbing at his hamstrings, and just as he does--

Behind him, from where he just came from, there's another Redcoat with a loaded musket, aimed at her.

... *BANG!!!*

The shot rings out, and before she can react -- the musket ball tears through her shoulder and knocks her from her feet.

The soldier whose legs she sliced crawls over on top of her, a knife in his hand, and he tries to bring it down on her throat, but she grabs his wrist.

BRITISH SOLDIER

Little Rebel bitch...

He spits as she wrestles with him, but he's stronger than she is, and her shoulder's spilling blood, and losing strength, and just as the knife's almost to her neck...

... a BAYONET BLADE appears through his chest, and his eyes bulge as he falls off her, and she sees a Continental soldier above them.

The Soldier reaches out, grabs her hand and pulls her to her feet, then turns and heads back into the fray.

Deborah catches her breath for a moment, then limps after him, blood coming from her left shoulder, but she's come too far to give up the fight now.

BEHIND THE BRITISH.

General O'Hara surveys the fighting, and after the initial surge, his men have started to fight back fiercely, but they're being overrun.

They don't have the same heart or spirit as the men that they're fighting against, or the same justness of cause as their enemy--

And it shows.

Then as more and more British are cut down, and the Americans will soon overrun them, O'Hara turns to the soldier next to him--

GENERAL O'HARA
Call for the militia. Quickly.
Let's let these "Americans" kill
each other.

And the soldier salutes, and runs into the night, deeper into the fort, as we go--

BACK TO:

DEBORAH.

As she fights with the Continentals, sporadic gunshots all around as she sees a Continental locked in a brawl with a Redcoat, and runs over--

... SLICE!!!

She cuts the Redcoat across the back, and he falls to the ground with a loud scream, then she turns to survey the battle.

They're winning, pushing the Redcoats back, but then from the darkness, a drum beat begins, and then another Company joins the British regiment, plainclothes soldiers that she's seen before.

It's the Loyalist Militia.

Her eyes turn to steel. She searches through them as they aim their muskets, and -- *BANG, BANG, BANG!!!* -- they fire and the front line of American soldiers fall in a bloody heap.

CAPTAIN WEBB
... *CHARGE!!!*

And Webb leads the American cry as they rush towards the militia -- *and the two sides meet* -- the Continentals already battle-weary, and the Loyalists fresh.

... *HACK, SLASH, SLICE!!!*

The mud now turns red with blood, as men from both sides fall.

Deborah's in the middle of the fray, doing her part, but also frantically searching through the enemy, looking for one soldier in particular.

And then she finds him.

DEBORAH
SCOTT!!!!

She yells, but he doesn't hear as he cuts down a Continental with his bayonet, then takes out a knife and STABS him in the throat.

Then he turns, and sees Deborah coming at him, and he grins as he takes her in--

SCOTT
Well, look at that - who would've guessed...

But she has only one thing on her mind, and no time for words, as she--

... *SWINGS!!!*

And he ducks her sword, and her blow goes wide, as he notices the blade she's carrying.

SCOTT
Did your boyfriend give that to you? He didn't die well, in the end, did he? The filthy traitor...

And she CHARGES -- *he dodges her, she rushes past* -- and he SLICES across her midsection, and blood flows from her stomach.

DEBORAH

AHHHHHHH!!!!

She looks down, notes her bleeding, then back up to see the mocking sneer on his face.

SCOTT

I knew there was something *weak* about you.

DEBORAH

You're a bastard and a coward. And you chose the wrong side.

SCOTT

No. I chose the side that paid me more, the same as any wise man would do. They call this a *revolution*, but no matter what they call it, war's always been a business, and you should have stuck to sewing our uniforms, where you belonged.

She charges again -- *SWINGS!!!* -- but he ducks, and knees her in the stomach, knocking the breath from her, then he knocks the sword from her hand, and--

... CRACK!!!

He backhands her across the face, so she falls to the ground, spitting blood from cracked lips.

SCOTT

They really shouldn't have sent a woman to do the work of men.

He bends down, picks up the Hessian sword from the ground, levels it at her chest.

SCOTT

How does it feel, knowing you're about to die, and that this was all for nothing?

DEBORAH

You should ask yourself the same question.

Deborah reaches into her uniform, takes out her pistol, points it at him, cocks the hammer and glares into his eyes.

And now there's fear.

SCOTT

No. Wait...

DEBORAH

You're a traitor, and the worst kind of man. And now it's the end.

She stands, holding the pistol pointed at him, and he sees his death in front of him -- *doesn't realize that the pistol's not loaded* -- then--

... *KABOOM!!!*

There's a huge EXPLOSION from an artillery shell that knocks Deborah from her feet, and as she falls, Scott sees his chance and starts to run.

Deborah looks up from the ground, knows she can't catch him, not with her limp, then sees the soldier next to her, the one she killed earlier.

She picks up his musket, drops to one knee and carefully takes aim at Scott's back as he runs, she'll only have one shot at this.

DEBORAH

(sotto)

Lord, please hear my prayer, and guide my hand, and help my bullet fly straight...

And she hesitates for a moment, her finger hovering over the trigger, then she squeezes, and--

... *BANG!!!*

Flint sparks powder, and the musket explodes a cloud of smoke, as the bullet flies through the air, making its way through the battle until it buries itself in Scott's back, and he falls.

She drops the musket, and picks up the Hessian sword, and walks to where he's crawling in the mud, and steps on him with her boot.

He turns and looks up at her, into her clear blue eyes, which have never had more fire, or more strength.

SCOTT

Please... I'm sorry... I'll give you more money than you could possibly imagine... I have that now... I'll show you my purse... please... please... I'll make you rich...

She sees him slobbering, begging, and it disgusts her, as she shakes her head, the tip of her sword hovering over his throat.

DEBORAH
You deserve worse.

And he opens his mouth, about to beg and plead, but she wants none of it, and--

... *SHHFFFTT!!*

She thrusts down, her blade piercing his neck, and blood pools in his mouth as he chokes, writhing in pain, and then he finally lies still, eyes glazed in death.

And then, after a moment, Deborah turns to survey the battle, and sees the militia being pushed back now, as well as the British regulars.

The Americans cheer, as they start to win the day, and see victory within their grasp, overrunning their enemies, as we go--

BACK TO:

THE BRITISH LINES.

And General O'Hara, standing behind the last men he has left, watching his soldiers cut down by the Continentals, their lines folding on themselves.

GENERAL O'HARA
My God...

And then -- *BANG!* -- a musket ball flies close to his head, and he ducks, the closest he's been to action, and it shakes him.

He waits one more moment, then turns from the fighting and hurries back across the fort, heading towards--

CUT TO:

THE NORTH SIDE (YORKTOWN).

Where Cornwallis is still giving orders for the defense of the fort against Washington's army, and the French that are fighting with him.

GENERAL O'HARA
Sir...

Cornwallis turns to sees General O'Hara, out of breath, in front of him.

GENERAL O'HARA

We fought, as well as we could, my Lord, but I'm afraid we couldn't push them back...

LORD CORNWALLIS

What the hell do you mean? You had twice their numbers!

GENERAL O'HARA

It wasn't the numbers, it was...

(then; almost awe in his voice)

... it was the way that they fought...

It's the only way that O'Hara can explain it, and all he can do is shrug.

Cornwallis stands staring at O'Hara for a moment longer, then turns to the south side of the fort, and looks for himself, with his spyglass--

And he sees the last few British soldiers defeated, their numbers dwindling down to nothing, the pride of the Americans swelling with every step they take.

Cornwallis puts the spyglass away, then stands in silence for a moment, before he looks at the ground, a proud man that's been broken.

GENERAL O'HARA

What are your orders, sir?

Cornwallis still looks at the ground, lost in his thoughts, and perhaps what his place in history will be now, after what's happened tonight.

LORD CORNWALLIS

(sotto)

Is this how it ends? Is this how an empire falls?

Another moment of silence, then Cornwallis finally shakes his head.

LORD CORNWALLIS

It's over, General. Order your men to retreat...

(then; his eyes turned down)

It's time to give Washington my sword.

And as General O'Hara salutes, and turns to leave, back into the night, Cornwallis looks out again, on his failure, everywhere in front of him...

CUT TO:

THE SOUTH END (YORKTOWN).

Where the Americans are finishing off the last of the British Soldiers and Loyalist Militia, the ground littered with three times as many enemy dead as Continentals.

Deborah staggers along, still fighting, she's losing a lot of blood from her shoulder, and her stomach, but she won't give up.

And just as fierce as the fighting had once been, in a moment, it suddenly seems to stop.

Then, in the distance--

BRITISH SOLDIERS
RETREAT!!!! RETREAT!!!! RETREAT!!!!

The call spreads among the British soldiers at the south end, and then echoes through Yorktown, so everyone hears, as the Americans watch their enemies turn and run.

Hamilton smiles from ear-to-ear, as he shakes the hands of men all around him. Webb breathes heavily, covered in mud and dirt and blood.

And Deborah bends down, to her knees, and picks up a handful of dirt.

Then she stands, lets the dirt slip through her fingers, watching it fall, as a Continental Soldier nearby notices, and asks--

CONTINENTAL SOLDIER
What's that?

The last of the dirt falls back to the ground, and she waits another moment, then turns and looks at him.

And then she smiles.

DEBORAH
It's ours.

And as the Continental Soldier smiles, too, and trumpets sound in the distance, signalling the surrender of the entire British Army...

FADE TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD -- YORKTOWN -- MORNING

Sunlight spills across the bloody battlefield as the BRITISH COMMANDERS ride out from Yorktown, and then the CONTINENTAL COMMANDERS ride from their army to meet them in the middle of the field.

We watch this from afar, and though we don't see them individually, among the Americans are Alexander Hamilton, Nathanael Greene, and George Washington, and they ride to meet O'Hara and the British.

(NOTE: Lord Cornwallis claimed he was sick on the day of the surrender and sent General O'Hara to give his sword to Washington in his place)

And as the Americans reach the British, and stop riding, and the formal ceremony of surrender begins, both armies watching...

CUT TO:

INT. MEDICAL TENT -- YORKTOWN -- MORNING

Deborah sits in a hospital bed, still muddy and covered in blood, and there's a bandage on her face as a NURSE works on her shoulder.

The Nurse pries the bullet from where it's still embedded deep in Deborah's muscle, and she grimaces as the Nurse works.

NURSE

Almost there. Almost there now,
almost got it out...

And then the bullet comes loose, and the Nurse binds a bandage over the small hole as she drops the bullet in a pan nearby.

NURSE

You handled that well.

DEBORAH

I've had some practice.

The bandage is tied off, and the Nurse smiles as she puts Deborah's arm in a sling.

NURSE

It cut through a lot of the muscle -
so it's a good thing it was your
left shoulder, instead of the
right.

Then, the Nurse is finished, and just as she's about to leave, she pauses, turns back.

NURSE
Thank you. For fighting for us.
For *all* of us.

A moment, as Deborah meets the older woman's eyes, then she nods.

And after one last smile, the Nurse leaves, and Deborah lays back in her bed.

CAPTAIN WEBB (O.S.)
We need to stop meeting like
this...

Deborah turns to see Captain Webb walking towards her, still covered in dirt and blood, too, he's been speaking with his wounded soldiers.

CAPTAIN WEBB
I saw you fighting, and I wanted to
say thank you... for proving me
right.

DEBORAH
I didn't do anything that any of
the other soldiers didn't.

CAPTAIN WEBB
I know, Robert. But I don't think
even you really believes that.

They wait there for a moment, such respect between them, then the Captain takes a sealed letter from his jacket and hands it to her.

DEBORAH
What's this?

CAPTAIN WEBB
A summons for you. To see the
General.
(beat)
It's above me, now.

She looks down at it, and sees George Washington's personal seal, and nods.

Then she looks back up, and meets the Captain's eyes, one last time.

DEBORAH
Thank you. For letting me do my
part.

CAPTAIN WEBB

No, Robert.

(beat)

It's we who thank you.

Then, after one more look between them, the Captain stands back from her bed, and he salutes her crisply, before he turns and leaves.

And as tears well in her eyes...

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD -- YORKTOWN -- DAY

Deborah walks among the soldiers, her face bandaged, her arm in a sling.

Her hair's grown longer, and she hasn't bound her breasts for some time now.

The men look at her as she passes, and then nod to her, because they saw her fighting, too -- and now she's one of them.

And she keeps walking, through the men, until she finally comes to--

A LARGE TENT.

Where two CONTINENTAL SOLDIERS stand guard at the entrance, and she walks to them, hands them the summons that Captain Webb gave her.

They look at it, then--

CONTINENTAL SOLDIER

He's waiting for you.

She pauses for a moment, gathering herself, then takes a deep breath as she walks inside.

CUT TO:

INT. GENERAL WASHINGTON'S TENT -- YORKTOWN -- DAY

Deborah walks in to see across from her, sitting behind a large desk, the man who by this point was already an American legend.

GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON (50): an enormous man for his time, standing 6'2, takes his reading glasses off and looks up as she enters.

He stands and takes her in, every inch of her, from toes to head, then--

GEORGE WASHINGTON
You're taller than I thought you'd be.

Deborah bows in front of him, but he walks around from his desk and puts a hand on her shoulder, stopping her, a small smile on his face.

GEORGE WASHINGTON
Please. Don't bow. One bows to a king, and that's what we've been fighting so hard to rid ourselves of, isn't it?

DEBORAH
Sir...

He pauses. Still looking back at her. Not quite sure yet what to make of her.

GEORGE WASHINGTON
When did you enlist in the army?

DEBORAH
In April, sir. In Massachusetts.

GEORGE WASHINGTON
And you told them your name was "*Robert Shurtleff*," from what I gather.

DEBORAH
Yes, sir.

GEORGE WASHINGTON
And what was your name before that? Before you enlisted?

A moment, then--

DEBORAH
It was Deborah, sir.
(beat)
Deborah Sampson.

General Washington looks back at her, and it's almost as if he's looking *through* her, his eyes penetrating to her very soul.

GEORGE WASHINGTON
What I've been trying to figure out, since I first heard your story, and who you were, was *why* do what you did?
(MORE)

GEORGE WASHINGTON (CONT'D)
 Why go through all the trouble of
 deceiving so many, just to carry a
 rifle with these men?

She pauses for a moment, gathering herself, and then meets
 his eyes and speaks from deep within her soul.

DEBORAH
 I'd always felt it, sir. Deep
 inside of me. What it would mean
 to have this country, for all of
 us.
 (thinking back, tears
 welling)
 And then it was something someone
 said to me once. "*Life is*
precious," they said, "*and what we*
do with our lives matters." I
 heard that, sir, and well...
 (beat)
 I suppose I wanted my life to
 matter.

GEORGE WASHINGTON
 And you thought that one soldier
 could make a difference in all
 this, among all the many thousands
 that are fighting?

DEBORAH
 Yes, sir. I did. Because it would
 make a difference to me.

He holds her eyes for a moment, digesting this, unexpectedly
 moved and emotional.

GEORGE WASHINGTON
 I have no sons or daughters of my
 own. Nor will I. Instead, I ask
 the people of this land to send
 their sons to me, to march and
 bleed and risk everything they have
 for this *idea* that we've been
 fighting for.

DEBORAH
 They do it gladly, sir.

GEORGE WASHINGTON
 I hope that's true, Ms. Sampson.
 More than anything, I do hope
 that's true...

Another moment between them, then Washington goes to his
 desk, and picks up a letter.

He walks over and hands it to her.

DEBORAH
What's this?

GEORGE WASHINGTON
Your discharge.

She looks back at him, and tears begin to well in her eyes, and he softens the blow.

GEORGE WASHINGTON
You were shot in the leg at Tarrytown. And then in the shoulder, on the march to Yorktown, and again in the other shoulder yesterday.

(beat)

You should have been sent home on medical leave months ago, and any lesser soldier most certainly would have been.

(then)

This is an honorable discharge from the Continental Army with full commendation for your service.

The tears start to come down her cheeks now, as she looks back at him.

DEBORAH
Thank you, sir.

GEORGE WASHINGTON
For what? You're a soldier of the Revolution. A treasonous Rebel, like all the rest of us, and I suppose now...

(beat)

Well, I suppose now we're all finally Americans, too, aren't we?

And then he smiles, and she smiles, too, as she salutes, and turns to the exit.

But, before she goes--

GEORGE WASHINGTON
Ms. Sampson...

She pauses, and turns back to him, meets his eyes.

GEORGE WASHINGTON
As soon as you walk out of this tent, Robert Shurtleff is going to cease to exist.

(MORE)

GEORGE WASHINGTON (CONT'D)

But unless I'm very mistaken, what he did *is* going to matter, a great deal, and perhaps even more than either of us will ever know.

(beat)

So your country thanks you for your service.

And then, with one last nod, and a final salute, she turns back to the exit, and pauses for a moment, thinking about what the General just said.

Then, a small smile crosses her lips, just for herself, and for what she's done, as she pushes the flap open and walks back outside, into the light.

CUT TO:

INT. TENT -- MILITARY ENCAMPMENT -- DAY

Where Deborah's finally alone in her tent, and she slowly takes off her uniform jacket, it's still muddy, torn, stained with blood, and she carefully folds it as it is, not changing anything.

Then she takes William's Hessian sword, and gently puts it on top of her folded jacket, then opens a trunk and sets both inside.

She looks down at them for a long moment, and then as she closes the trunk...

FADE TO:

A LARGE FIELD.

Filled with long rows of corn at the end of a growing season that's been too hot and dry, the stalks are withered, the sun beating down on them.

And in the field a FARMER works under the hot sun, with his son (EARL, 8) next to him, this is:

BENJAMIN GANNETT (34).

He stands and looks into the distance, across the field, to where a tall woman with a pronounced limp walks towards him, their daughter next to her.

SUPER: Sharon, Massachusetts -- September 20th, 1804.

Deborah's face is lined with age, and when she reaches Benjamin, she smiles, kisses him on the lips as she surveys the field and he wipes his brow.

DEBORAH
How's it been?

BENJAMIN
Long. And it's still hot. But
with Earl's help here we're going
to manage.

Benjamin ruffles Earl's hair, as Deborah lets go of their daughter's hand, and she runs off to play with her brother in the field.

They look at the children, and then speak softer, so they don't hear.

DEBORAH
You're not going to be able to do
it all, are you?

BENJAMIN
Not before winter, no. But we'll
do the best we can.

Deborah and Benjamin watch the children for another moment, then Deborah turns to her husband, and there's sadness in her eyes, and his, too.

DEBORAH
It won't be enough. And you don't
have a wife that's able enough to
help.

BENJAMIN
You took three bullets. I'm just
thankful that you're alive, and we
found each other, and now there's
peace again, and will be for our
children.

And he smiles, and kisses her again; it's a good man that she's found.

BENJAMIN
We'll find a way to manage,
Deborah. Like we always have.

She turns to look at their children, still playing in the corn, and she wants to believe her husband, but they both know he's just trying to be strong--

DEBORAH
Can you watch them for the
afternoon?

BENJAMIN
What's the matter?

DEBORAH
Nothing, I just... I have an
appointment in the city.

BENJAMIN
I can go with you, if you'd like.

DEBORAH
And let the fields go untended? We
can't.

And he looks back at her, and sees her eyes, and he nods, knowing his wife, and the look on her face, and she kisses him on the cheek.

DEBORAH
I love you.

Then she turns and starts back towards their farmhouse, in the distance, as Benjamin watches her go before turning back to his work.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM -- GANNETT HOUSE -- DAY

Deborah walks into the bedroom and goes to the closet where she moves clothes aside, then pulls a chest forward that we recognize.

She lifts the lid, opens it and looks down, sees her uniform, still folded neatly with blood stained on it, and the Hessian sword, dusty from the years, but unmistakable, and then next to them, the Gadsden Flag that the Farmer's son gave to her on the road to Yorktown.

And as she looks down at everything, so much history in such a small box...

CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS -- BOSTON -- DAY

Deborah walks the streets of Boston, the same as she once did as a younger woman, though now she's wearing her uniform of the Continental Army with three holes in it; one in each shoulder, and the thigh.

She looks around and sees that the city's changed -- the promise and spirit that it once held has been realized; there's pride in the air, and in the people's eyes, and the way that they walk.

People turn to look at her as she walks past them, a woman wearing the uniform of a soldier, something strictly reserved for men.

And she keeps going, through the streets, until she finally comes to--

THE BOSTON COURTHOUSE.

Where she stops in front of it, looking up at the tall building, then down at the pocket watch she carries, checking the time.

Then she puts the watch away, and takes out her cross, the same one she's always worn around her neck, and holds it tightly.

DEBORAH

(sotto)

*Please, Lord, lend me your strength
today, lend me your strength one
last time...*

And as she continues her prayer, she starts up the steps, head held high, fire in her eyes again, walking as proudly as her limp allows.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTHOUSE -- BOSTON -- DAY

Deborah stands in front of a whigged and powdered JUDGE, seated above her, and the pews next to him filled with more similarly dressed men -- *and no women* -- the jury that will hear her case.

The Judge has her Continental discharge papers in hand, as well as her enlistment papers, studying both through thick glasses, and then he takes the glasses off and looks up, holding only one of the sheets.

JUDGE

And why is it exactly that you think you deserve to collect a soldier's pension?

DEBORAH

Because I was a soldier, sir.

JUDGE

Your discharge papers seem to be in order, but these enlistment papers are for a Robert Shurtleff - and I think I can say with absolute certainty that's not who stands in front of the court.

DEBORAH

But it is, sir. I'm Robert Shurtleff.

JUDGE

Then who's Deborah Sampson?

DEBORAH

I'm her too, sir.

JUDGE

And could you please explain to the court how that's possible?

She pauses for a moment, gathering herself, then meets the judge's eyes.

DEBORAH

Robert Shurtleff's the name I used so that I could enlist.

JUDGE

So you lied on this paper and then signed it?

DEBORAH

Yes, sir.

JUDGE

And now you want to be paid for your dishonesty?

DEBORAH

No. I want to be paid for being a soldier, which is only what I was promised.

(beat; as the Judge looks down at her; narrowing his eyes)

I can barely walk some days because of the bullet I took in the leg at Tarrytown. I took two other bullets, in either shoulder, one at Yorktown, and the other on the road there, when we were ambushed.

JUDGE

Who is the "we" that you're referring to?

DEBORAH

Captain Webb's company, sir. The
4th Massachusetts Regiment.

JUDGE

And what is it that you do now, Ms.
Sampson? After you've retired from
your soldiering.

She notices his mocking tone, but she continues on anyways,
because she has to.

DEBORAH

We run a farm, sir. My husband and
me, up in Sharon. But with my
injuries, I can't even hold my own
children in my arms, much less be
of any help to him in the fields,
or really in the kitchen, either.
And our children are still small,
so they're not able to help yet,,
and if we have one more winter like
the last one, then...

(she pauses; her emotion
rising)

Well, then I'm not sure if we'll
make it.

She swallows. Gathers herself. Meets the Judge's eyes with
her own.

DEBORAH

I lied when I enlisted, sir. It's
true, and I don't deny it. But I
fought. Like all the other
soldiers. And I just want a
pension, the same as the men I
stood and bled with. Not more, not
less. That's all that I'm asking
the court.

He pauses for a moment, looking back at her, then comes to
his decision.

JUDGE

While I personally sympathize with
your cause, the court does not find
it possible to reward perjury and
dishonesty with coin, and to do so
would set a very dangerous
precedent.

(then)

I'm sorry, Ms. Sampson. But the
law is the law.

She stares back at him in disbelief, as he's about to dismiss
her, then--

PAUL (O.S.)

Has everything that we fought and died for been so quickly forgotten - have we turned our backs already on those who gave everything for our freedom?

Deborah turns to see an old man walking through the pews towards them, and then she recognizes him--

It's Paul, the man from the gun shop, who suggested that she buy the screw-barrel pistol that saved her life more than once.

And the Judge recognizes him, too.

JUDGE

What are you doing at the court, Mr. Revere?

PAUL

I saw the notice for Ms. Sampson's trial in the ledger, and thought I'd pop by.

Deborah turns and looks at him, and he looks back at her with a kindly smile, and a wink--

PAUL

It's good to see you again.

And she realizes that this is infamous Revolutionary hero and patriot Paul Revere...

JUDGE

And do you have something else to add?

PAUL

Only that I'd wish for you to reconsider your position, for your sake, as well as for Ms. Sampson's, too, of course.

JUDGE

For my sake?

PAUL

You're standing here before God, about to levy a gross measure of injustice, though I'm sure that's not your intent.

JUDGE

A gross measure of injustice? She lied, Mr. Revere.

(MORE)

JUDGE (CONT'D)

She raised her hand, swore an oath before God, and then broke it.

PAUL

We've all broken oaths, sir. Every single one of us standing in this room. And that's why we're free, and this land beneath our feet is our own.

A moment, then Paul turns to Deborah, and points at her, as he speaks louder--

PAUL

And it took many years, and too much blood, but it's soldiers like the one standing before you that we have to thank for all that we have now.

JUDGE

She could be lying and making the whole thing up. She could have gotten that uniform from her brother, or a dead soldier on the side of the road, or any number of places.

PAUL

You have her discharge papers. If I'm not mistaken, they were signed by General Washington himself.

JUDGE

It's Washington's signature, but it was signed for Robert Shurtleff - not Deborah Sampson.

PAUL

And yet that's who's standing before you, isn't it? Robert Shurtleff. And also Deborah Sampson, a soldier of the Revolution, who fought for all of us. Is she a woman? Of course she is. Did she lie when she enlisted? She did, there's no denying it.

(then; he looks around the room; meeting every eye he can find)

But let it be said, today, as clearly as anything has ever been said... that if even half the men in this room have as much courage and strength of heart as this woman, then well...

(then; softer, and with a smile)

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)
Well, this will be a very great
country, indeed.

A moment, all eyes in the room on Paul Revere, and he nods to the Judge.

PAUL
Do the right thing, sir. Do the
right thing, here before God and
the law, and compensate this
soldier for the service she gave to
her country.

The Judge sits back in his chair, and meets Deborah's eyes, in front of him, and he looks her up and down, perhaps challenging and changing his idea of who a soldier is, and what it means to be a hero.

Then he turns to look at his jury, and can see tears glistening in men's eyes, and already knows what their decision will be...

CUT TO:

EXT. COURTHOUSE -- BOSTON -- DAY

Paul Revere and Deborah walk out of the courthouse together, and back onto the streets of Boston, people coming and going around them.

PAUL
The pension won't be much, but it's
something, and it'll get your
family through the winter, and
likely the next, too.

Deborah takes that in, gratefully nodding her head, then turns back to look at him.

DEBORAH
When I met you before. Here in
Boston. You told me you were a
dentist.

PAUL
And I am.

DEBORAH
But, your ride... you're a...
you're a hero.

PAUL
We all are, aren't we? All of us
who fought for this country.
Yourself included. I did my part.
You did your part.

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

(smiles)

And now here we are, and it's truly
a beautiful thing, isn't it?

They pause, and look at each other, the infamous harbor in
the background, where this all began.

DEBORAH

How did you really know to come
today?

PAUL

In my old age I've made it my
business to have an interest in the
affairs of the veterans of our
Revolution, and your story was of
particular interest to me.

(beat)

And, like I told the Judge, I saw
it announced in the ledger.

DEBORAH

But you knew me.

PAUL

Yes. But not until I showed up
today.

DEBORAH

How? You saw me for a moment, in a
shop, thirteen years ago - how did
you recognize the same person in
court today?

He looks back at her, for a moment, and then he smiles, all
the way to his eyes.

PAUL

In case you haven't realized it,
yet... you're quite unforgettable,
Ms. Sampson.

And then with a tip of his hat, he turns and starts back on
his way.

Deborah waits for a moment, watching as he leaves, then she
looks at all the people around her, the smiles on their
faces, the lives they've built, and the happiness that
freedom brings.

And then she smiles, too, small at first, then bigger, as she
walks into the distance, back towards her farm, and her
family, and as she does:

THE CAMERA CRANES UP:

Above all the buildings of Boston, and we see the entirety of this great city, the place where a Revolution was born, and the people that lived there, and helped make this country their own.

Then we push in towards what was once a Continental Flag, but is now an AMERICAN FLAG, *15 stars and 15 stripes*, sewn in bright and proud colors, snapping in the breeze, high above everything, keeping watch.

And as we hold here...

FADE TO:

TEXT ON THE SCREEN.

After filing several formal petitions, and with lobbying from Paul Revere, Deborah Sampson finally received her pension, and on her death from Yellow Fever in 1827, her children were issued additional compensation by a Special Act of Congress, "for the relief of the heirs of Deborah Sampson, a soldier of the Revolution."

In 1983, Governor Michael Dukakis and the state legislature named Deborah Sampson the Official Heroine of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and May 23rd to be known as "Deborah Sampson Day."

She's buried in Rock Ridge Cemetery in Sharon, Massachusetts, where one side of her tombstone reads: "Deborah Sampson, 1760-1827," and the other:

"Robert Shurtleff, 1781-1783."

THE END