

PRAISE FOR *THE PATRIOT BRIDE*

“*The Patriot Bride* is an amazing adventure of patriotism, adventure, and romance. Kimberley Woodhouse has long been one of my favorite authors, and this story did not disappoint. With her attention to detail and historical accuracy, Kim weaves a tale that is sure to keep the reader turning the pages. I think my readers will truly enjoy this story.”

—Tracie Peterson,
bestselling author of the Heart of the Frontier series

“Kimberley Woodhouse is a master at historical romance, and it’s nearly impossible to find her equal. I highly recommend *The Patriot Bride* for an instant immersion into a beautiful romance laced with authentic details around our country’s beginnings.”

—Colleen Coble, *USA Today* bestselling author of
The View from Rainshadow Bay and the Rock Harbor series

“*The Patriot Bride* is my favorite kind of historical fiction and Woodhouse executes it so well. She plays out great moments in history by setting fictional characters right next to true historical figures. I loved reading this. I wish schools taught history in such a fun way.”

—Mary Connealy, bestselling author of *The Accidental Guardian*

“In the latest installment of the wildly popular Daughters of the Mayflower series, bestselling author Kimberley Woodhouse takes the reader on a breathtaking journey woven around the historical facts of the American Revolution. Fans of historical romance are going to love this action-packed tale!”

—Kathleen Y’Barbo, bestselling author of *The Pirate Bride* and
My Heart Belongs in Galveston, Texas

“*The Patriot Bride* is a tale as spirited and full of conviction as the era it represents. At a time of revolution, the twin virtues of duty and love compete and compel. Readers are sure to cheer on endearing characters until the very last page.”

–Jocelyn Green, award-winning author of *A Refuge Assured*

“Woodhouse’s love for this time period and these characters shines through on every page. If you enjoyed *The Mayflower Bride*, you’re going to love *The Patriot Bride*.”

–Becca Whitham, award-winning co-author of *The Promise Bride*

“A must read for anyone who appreciates historical fiction and the sacrifices made to establish this great country. *The Patriot Bride* is populated with unexpected twists and turns amidst a familiar story of our nation’s founding. Readers will see sides of George Washington and Benjamin Franklin not taught in school. Kimberley Woodhouse blends fact with fiction in such a way historical fiction fans will be hooked and inspired to give air baths a try.”

–Darcie J. Gudger, author of *Spin*, *Toss*, and *Catch*

*The
Patriot
Bride*



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All scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either products of the author's imagination or used fictitiously. Any similarity to actual people, organizations, and/or events is purely coincidental.

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Our mission is to inspire the world with the life-changing message of the Bible.



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DEDICATION

This book is lovingly dedicated to my
outrageously incredible-one-and-only-son: Josh.

Who somehow along the way earned the nickname of George.

You've been a delight to me since before you were
born (even though you broke one of my ribs).

And I've loved you more and more each day.

As a baby you were cuddly, smiley, and really quite chunky. (I'm sure you're loving me for writing that in this dedication. I *should* include a picture. . . .) You never met a stranger and could cheer up and encourage everyone you encountered. You entertained us and made us laugh and gave the very best hugs. Your creative genius still amazes me and it *almost* makes up for all the Legos I stepped on in your room over the years.

It's hard to believe that you are grown and married—(gasp! How did I get that old? And how did you survive with a mom who homeschooled you and tortured you with math drills and diagramming sentences? And let's not forget all the book tours? Especially once you were old enough to handle all the hookups on the RV. . .

I won't go into details, I promise)—but I've treasured watching you grow and mature into the amazing man that you are today.

I'm sure I've embarrassed you plenty over the years,
but it was all worth it, right?

You are incredible, and I couldn't be prouder.

You amaze me every day.

I could never tell you how much you mean to me
and what a thrill it is to be your mom. Oh, and one more
thing. . . just remember that I love you more.

Dear Reader,

How exciting to be back with the Daughters of the Mayflower series. I hope you have enjoyed *The Mayflower Bride*, *The Pirate Bride*, and *The Captured Bride*. As the fourth book in this series, *The Patriot Bride* follows the descendants of the Lyttons and brings us to a fascinating part of our history: the Revolutionary War. Make sure you watch for *The Liberty Bride* and *The Cumberland Bride* also being published this year.

In documenting the great events of our country's history in this series, it is important for me to remind you that this is a work of fiction. While I strive to be as historically accurate as possible, in many places I had to take artistic license.

For instance, George Washington; Benjamin Franklin; and his son, William, are integral pieces of American history and are also key characters in *The Patriot Bride*. But please note that even though I did extensive research, there's only so much I could ascertain about personalities and other details. So good ol' George and Ben are depicted in the way my imagination created them for this story. I created their dialogue and traits, although I based my interpretations on information gleaned from numerous biographies. The part they play in Matthew's life in this story is not based on any fact; it is purely fictitious. The part that George plays in Faith's life is also a creation of my mind. As is Benjamin Franklin's role in the story. It is not my wish to take anything away from these brilliant men who were founding fathers of our country. Any mistakes are also purely my own. Please see the Note from the Author at the back of the book about other details and a timeline discrepancy with Benjamin Franklin as well.

Might I suggest some wonderful nonfiction books to read if you wish to truly know these great men? *His Excellency George Washington* by Joseph J. Ellis is an excellent biography of our first president. *Washington: A Life* by Ron Chernow is also a brilliant read (even though the tome is tiny print and more than eight hundred pages long). *George Washington: A Collection* compiled and edited by W. B. Allen is a fabulous compilation of the writings of this amazing man. *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* is also an incredible read and one of my preferred choices. It is definitely a classic. One of my favorite parts is seeing how he scheduled his day. Lots to learn from both of these fascinating and honorable men.

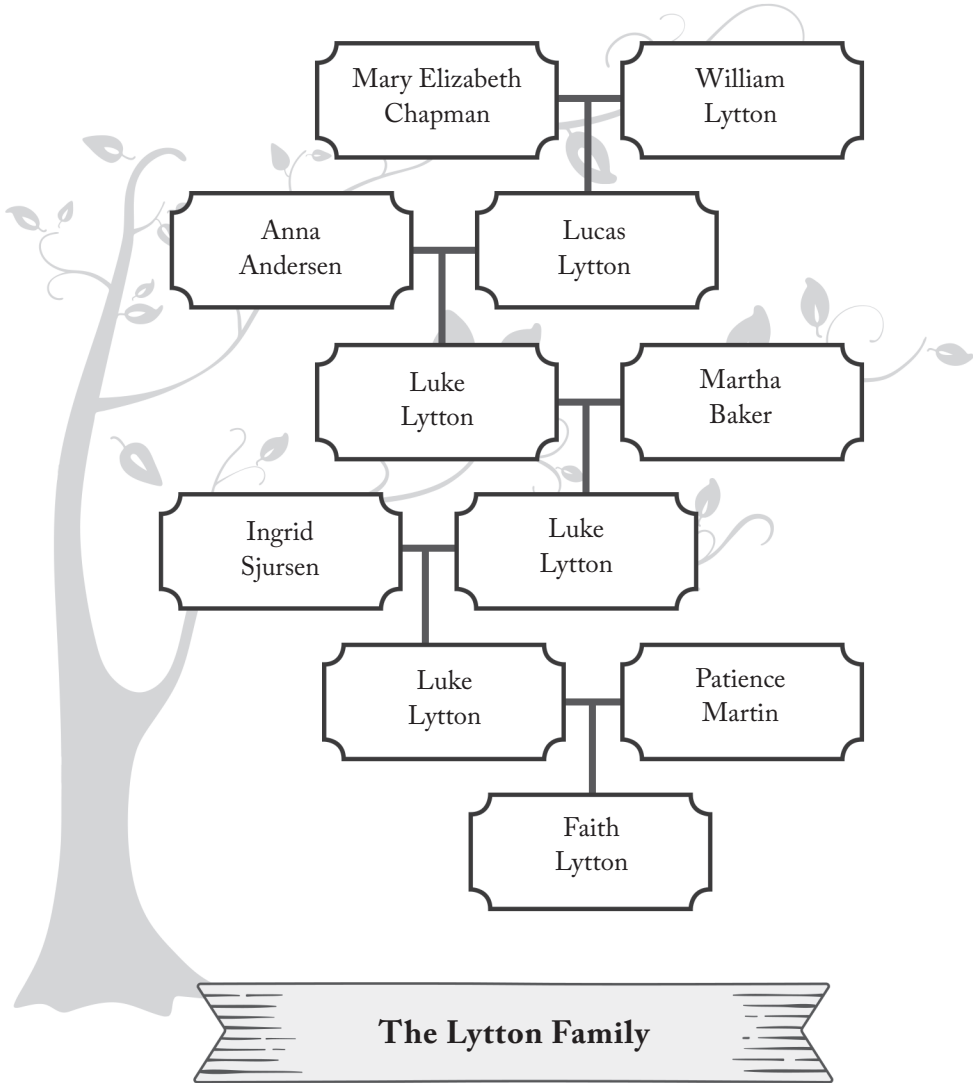
Charles Thomson was the secretary of the Continental Congress and also one of the Sons of Liberty, along with Paul Revere, Alexander Hamilton, Samuel Adams, John Hancock, and even Benedict Arnold, along with many others. Their depiction in this story corresponds with events that actually occurred in history, but all the details are created for the purpose of this story.

For your ease of reading, I've written the majority of the manuscript in modern English with just a few hints here and there of colonial expressions to help create a sense of the time period. This was to aid the flow of the story and make it understandable for the modern reader.

For more details on the actual events of the American Revolution and the people who truly lived during this time, I've given sources, websites, and links in the Note from the Author at the back of the book.

Enjoy the journey,
Kimberley

Daughters of the Mayflower



William Lytton married Mary Elizabeth Chapman (Plymouth 1621)

Parents of 13 children, one who was Lucas

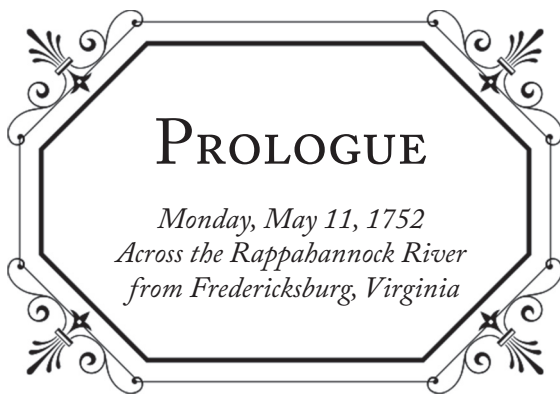
Lucas Lytton (born 1625) married Anna Andersen (Massachusetts 1649)

Luke Lytton (born 1652) married Martha Baker (Massachusetts 1675)

Luke Lytton (born 1677) married Ingrid Sjursen (Massachusetts 1699)

Luke Lytton (born 1700) married Patience Martin (Virginia 1730)

Only child was Faith Lytton



Ten-year-old Faith Lytton placed her hands on her hips—like Mama did when she was exasperated—and looked at the sad little group of puny troops allotted to her. Why must the bigger and mostly older boys always insist that their teams be so mismatched? A huff left her lips.

“What’re we gonna do, Faith?” Tommy kicked the dirt. “They win every time.”

Several of the other boys whined their discontent. It wasn’t that she didn’t like her team. In fact, come rain or come shine, they had been the same team for almost forever. It’s just they were all. . . well. . . *small*.

Taunts echoed across the field from their opponents, the League of Victorious Virginians—a ridiculous name for ridiculous boys. Obsessed with playing war and pretending to be soldiers, the league wanted nothing more than to *win*, so much so they fought their skirmishes against younger, smaller opponents.

Faith narrowed her eyes. The only girl under sixteen years of age within ten miles amidst uncountable boys, she had learned to hold her own with the lads a long time ago. Now, she found herself a leader. Even if it was of the scrawny crowd.

How could she teach the other team a lesson? They weren’t

all older, nor were they smarter. Just because they were bigger and stronger shouldn't mean that they should get their way every time. It was almost like they just wanted to tromp all over the smaller, skinnier, and more studious kids.

Of which she found herself a part.

Another huff, but this time bigger. If only the other team could feel her aggravation all the way across the field. She was tired of getting tromped. Plain ol' tired of it. She wanted to win.

"Faith?" Charlie poked her in the shoulder. "Come on, we gotta come up with something."

"I'm thinking." She glared at the boy she outweighed by probably twenty pounds, even though he was five months older and she was thin as a rail, as Mama would say. Scrawny indeed.

"Well, don't take all day. My ma won't let me eat supper if I show up late again."

Faith glanced around at the other nine members of her team. Skinny, short, a bunch of boys who'd rather stay at home and work their sums than play war every day. Then she took a long look at the others. Taller and stronger. There really wasn't a contest. But. . . She tapped a finger against her chin. They weren't that bright. In fact, there wasn't a truly intelligent one in the bunch. Mama would scold her for such thoughts, but Mr. Brickham—her tutor—would laugh because it was true and he loved what he called "Faith's inquisitive intelligence." The thought made her smile.

Her team had been going about this the wrong way for too long.

The only way to win would be to outsmart them. And while the bigger boys might have the brawn, her team definitely had the brains.

She turned toward the pond. An idea struck her in an instant which caused her smile to grow. Trying not to giggle with

glee—because soldiers didn’t giggle—she gathered the rest of her group into a tight circle and whispered her plan.

Several of her team looked to the pond and shrugged, while the others appeared concerned. . .or was it confused? It really wasn’t that difficult.

Tommy crossed his arms over his chest. “I don’t know, Faith. That sounds awfully risky.” He crinkled up his nose.

“It’ll work. Trust me.” The grin that split her face couldn’t be contained. Wait until she wrote George about it. He’d be impressed with her plan, she just knew it. The letter she’d received from him yesterday was sitting on her dresser waiting to be answered, and boy, wouldn’t it be grand to write her friend about a victory?

As her team walked to the center of the field, she thought about what she would write. George Washington was more than just a friend—he was her best friend. Add to that, he was her family’s closest neighbor. Since Faith was an only child, she’d followed George around all her growing-up years. Wherever he went around their two farms, she’d traipse along behind him. She looked up to the boy as an older brother. And when he’d left to go learn more about surveying for Lord Fairfax, she’d cried. That day had broken Faith’s heart, because George was her pal. But he’d promised to write her letters and visit as often as he could.

While penmanship had been her least favorite to study, she’d put great effort into learning how to correspond with him. From the time she was five years old until this day, she’d been determined to pen her own letters to George. Much to her mother’s consternation.

Not because Mama didn’t want her writing letters or learning penmanship, but because she had given Mama fits over what she wanted to learn and *when* she wanted to learn it. On more than one occasion, Mama—whose Christian name was Patience—had proclaimed that the good Lord above had a sense of humor since she

had to practice the virtue from sun up to sun down with Faith. That was probably half the reason Papa hired Mr. Brickham so early for her. Oh, he might have told her it was because she was so smart and they wanted her to have the very best education they could provide, but she knew better.

Because she wanted to impress George—and didn't want to exasperate Mama—she worked harder and soon wrote flowing letters to her pal. They were quite grown-up too. George often said so.

She'd always wanted to be grown-up like him—he was ten years her elder—but George told her there was no rush to take on the responsibilities of an adult. And he should know, having lost his father when he was only eleven.

He constantly reminded her there were plenty of children her own age.

Plenty of children, yes, but there was one problem. They were all *boys*. So George taught her to use her smarts and keep up with them.

Well, wouldn't George be proud now?

The two teams came together in the center of the field. Robert—the leader of the league—gave her a smirk and shook his head as he looked down at her. “Which side of the pond do you want? Since there's no chance of ya winning, we'll let you choose this time.”

Faith put on her best frown and crossed her arms over her middle. War was serious business. Even if it was just a game. Time for them to take her seriously. “We'll take the west side.”

Several moans came from the boys behind her. Never mind them. She knew her plan would work.

Robert laughed. “Sure, Faith. You can have whatever you want.” He gestured to two of his team. “Post the flags.” He turned back to her. “Same rules as always. No one can leave their side until the

horn blows. If you are captured by another team member, you're out. Whichever team captures the other's flag first, wins. Agreed?" He stuck out his hand.

Faith grabbed it and shook.

"You've got thirty minutes to get to your flag, plan your attack, and then John will blow the horn for the battle to begin." Robert snickered then turned back to his team.

With a wave of her hand, Faith motioned for her team to follow, and she ran for the reeds on the west side of the pond. The pond was always the chosen battleground because to capture the opponent's flag, you had to venture through woods and dense undergrowth while trying to avoid the enemy. The league was good at hiding people along the route so that she normally lost a good portion of her team before they even reached the half-way point. This time would be different. The other team wouldn't expect them to do anything out of the ordinary.

As her little band crouched in the reeds in front of their flag, she kept looking to the woods. "Ya know, they're going to set up just like they always do because they *always* win with that strategy. They will hide enough of their team to try and capture us along the way in the woods, but we won't be there. Let them think we don't have any other plan. So just stay here. We'll pretend we are coming up with a plan—which we already have—while they think it will be like every other time, and then when we start, they will get into position. The two they'll send to advance on our flag will wait to scare us, but since we're not going to take that route, we should have about twenty minutes to make it to the other side."

Charlie chuckled. "I can't wait to see their faces when we surround their flag." He lowered his brow. "Hey, why didn't ya come up with this plan sooner?"

“Do I have to do all the thinking around here?” Faith pushed his shoulder.

“No. But I just wish you woulda—’cause we’re gonna win!”

The rest of the group caught on to the excitement, and Faith enjoyed listening to the boys chatter about what they wanted to chant for their victory. While the entire team was educated at home and quite studious, Faith’s private tutor taught her more than just arithmetic and reading. Mr. Brickham had a passion for history, and since Faith had a leaning toward tomboyish ways, she often coerced him into teaching her about famous battles. Mr. Brickham told her it was fine with her parents unless she began to get behind in other studies.

While the strategy she’d devised was only for a game, she knew her teacher would be proud.

A shuffle in the reeds next to them made her hush the group. The horn hadn’t sounded yet, so which one of the other team was trying to sneak in and cheat?

She held her breath while her teammates appeared to do the same. Eyes glued to the shifting reeds on the right.

A familiar face split the stalks. “George!” Faith’s relief made her put a hand to her chest. “What are you doing here?”

Several of the boys moved closer. George was quite a fascination for them, being named the surveyor of Culpepper County at a mere seventeen years of age. All the boys wanted to be like him.

“I came home to visit Mother and wanted to stop in and see how you were first.” Her lifelong friend sat in the reeds, glanced around, and dipped his head low, which was quite a feat. He was really tall. “And it seems you are doing very well. Is this one of the battles you have told me about in your letters?”

“Yes.” She couldn’t help but smile up at him as she thrilled in her team’s admiration for her friend. Lifting her shoulders back,

she hoped George saw her as a leader and not just a child, but her emotions won over and she threw her arms around his neck. He was here! And he would be able to watch her team finally win. Joy bubbled up inside her.

But it was time to be serious. She had a battle to win.

Faith pulled back and stuck a finger in his face, trying to stand as tall as she could and look as authoritative as possible. Even standing she barely topped a couple inches above his seated frame. “But I need you to stay hidden. We haven’t begun, and I have a plan to beat the league once and for all.” Nodding, Faith wiped her hands on her dress. This was more important than ever—George was here to witness it.

“What?” He put a hand to his chest. “I came to offer my assistance, Captain Lytton.” He gave her a wink. “You do not want my help?”

“Oh, couldn’t he?” Tommy pleaded. “We could win for sure!”

Charlie shook his head at the same moment Faith did. “Any other time, we’d love for you to be on our team, but you’re too big.”

“And”—Faith piped up—“we need to win on our own. They’d never admit to us winning if we allow you to help.”

George looked a bit amused. He crossed his arms and sat hunkered in the reeds.

Faith placed a hand over his. “I can do this.”

He cocked an eyebrow. “I have no doubt. So when does it begin?”

The horn sounded across the pond.

“Now.” Faith left George and crawled to the edge of the pond, waving for the others to follow. Not even looking back to see if everyone was with her, she climbed into the small skiff. Each *thunk* behind her told her another teammate had climbed in as she kept an eye on the sides. So far so good. They didn’t seem to weigh it down too much. Give another point to the scrawny team. Taking

one more glance to the rear, she looked at Charlie. He nodded from the back. They were all in and crouched down. Faith and Charlie each had a paddle and started rowing as quietly as they could toward a small island covered with trees in the middle of the pond. The scent of algae and grass filled her nose. Her nose twitched. Holding in a sneeze to keep from giving away her team's position, Faith scrunched up her nose and shook her head.

A few minutes later, her face cracked into a smile as they reached the island. All was quiet. So far, the other team hadn't noticed the new strategy. The league had no idea what they were doing. Faith held a finger over her lips as her team snuck out of the boat. They kept quiet as they picked up the skiff and carried it through the trees.

At the breach in the trees on the other side, Faith hurried them forward. "We are almost there." She kept her voice as low as possible. "From this point on, it's run across the beach and then row as fast as we can."

Anticipation glowed on the boys' faces. The win was within their grasp, and they all knew it. It took more than a half hour to run around the pond, and that was without hindrances of watching for the enemy. It had been maybe ten minutes, and they were over halfway there—and their opponents were still unaware of their strategy.

Running for all she was worth, Faith dragged the band of small boys along with the boat to the shore. Once they were back in the water, her energy surged, and she paddled with every ounce of strength she had.

A yell echoed across the water. "Where did they go?"

A few more yells answered back. No one from the league knew where her team was. Not even risking a glance behind, Faith paddled the last few strokes. They reached the opposite shore and

tumbled out on top of each other. She grinned. The other team's flag stood in front of them not more than twenty feet. Could George see them? Wouldn't he be proud?

"Come on!" Faith ran toward the flag and didn't care if anyone heard her. "Let's capture it together! All of us!"

Robert ran from the north side of the woods and his jaw dropped. He waved his arms, screaming at his team to come out from hiding.

When her team reached the flag, Faith yelled for all she was worth. "We won! We captured the league's flag!"

Robert kicked at the dirt then started throwing rocks which splashed in great *kerplunks* in the pond. Apparently he was the one who should have been guarding their flag.

It wasn't hard to determine that he wasn't happy about losing. After several moments of his fit, several other boys raced to his side and the calamity only grew. Until they spotted George across the pond, walking toward the field.

Faith knew the exact moment they spotted him because they all straightened up and stopped acting like two-year-olds.

Robert pulled the horn from inside his shirt and blew three short bursts calling everyone back.

Faith grabbed the flag and marched to the field area where the two teams had met before they began. Her team chanted about their victory while she carried the flag, and her chest swelled with pride. She'd done it. Well, *they'd* done it. But it had been *her* idea, and it worked.

It took a long time for everyone to reach the field. Several of the league boys were covered in mud and leaves—obviously from the places they'd been hiding to ambush Faith's team—and none looked too happy.

George strode toward the group and immediately the bigger

boys from the league approached him with their cries of cheating. He shook his head and smiled. “They did not cheat. I watched the whole thing. It was a brilliant and well-executed plan.”

Robert began to argue again. But George held up a hand and stopped him. “Every time you play—win or lose—you learn a little more. Faith’s strategy was a good one, and it will challenge all of you to come up with different strategies next time.” He laid a hand on Robert’s shoulder and winked. “It helps to have a sneaky girl and smaller teammates sometimes—everyone can have value on a team. Not just the strong ones.”

Faith beamed under George’s praise. Not only had her team beat the undefeated League of Victorious Virginians—a name she would demand they change considering today’s loss—but her dear friend had helped to teach those big boys a lesson. And they *always* listened to George.

Maybe next time they would suggest dividing the teams up evenly. But as Faith gazed around at her group, she wasn’t sure she’d want a different troop of soldiers. Her team—scrawny as they were—lifted her up on their shoulders, and she waved the opponent’s flag. Smiling at George, she yelled quite dramatically, “Victory or death!”

Her older friend laughed. “Let us hope it never comes to that, young Faith. . . er, excuse me, Captain Lytton.” He bowed low.

Movement behind George’s bent frame caused Faith to jump down from the boys’ shoulders. Morton—her father’s valet—ran toward them looking quite grim.

Morton never ran.

Her heart drummed and sank. Dread drowned out her joy of victory. Then she saw it. Smoke.

Rising in the distance above her home.



George stood by the fireplace in his mother's parlor and listened to Morton and the Lyttons' solicitor. A man George knew all too well because Mr. Crenshaw had also been his father's solicitor. Over the years, the gentleman had steered George in understanding his own inheritance. Small as it was, if not for Lawrence—his older brother—and Crenshaw, George would have been lost. His father's death at such a young age had dealt a huge blow to him. How would Faith deal with double the loss? How could he help her?

But he had to. He stood straighter under the new weight he carried.

She was now his ward.

At age twenty, George began to feel the full scope of what lay before him. Faith had always been like a puppy following him around. She was like another little sister to him. She adored him. And he had always enjoyed the little sprite's company.

But now he was responsible for her well-being. For managing her estate until she was old enough to inherit.

He turned his attention back to Crenshaw.

Luke and Patience Lytton had been killed in a blaze that took out half the manor in minutes. The Lyttons had property, slaves, servants, and a vast amount of wealth. Faith was their only child.

Before he died, George's father—Augustine, otherwise known as Gus—had been best friends with Luke. Apparently, Luke had asked Gus to take care of his family in case anything happened to him. And in case of the loss of both Mr. and Mrs. Lytton, Gus Washington would become Faith's guardian until she turned twenty-one and inherited her family's fortune.

The mantle had passed to George when his father died. Lawrence was too far away at Mount Vernon to handle anything here.

Luke Lytton had never wanted his will changed, telling Crenshaw that if anyone would look out for Faith and her best interests, it would be George.

But Luke couldn't have thought he'd leave this life so soon. Faith was but the tender age of ten. George a mere twenty.

He looked out the window. Not only would the Lytton manor need to be restored, but the staff would all need taking care of, the estate would need to thrive so it would provide stable income for Faith's future. And then there was the question of where she would live. The life of a surveyor was not a decent life for a young girl, and it would hardly be appropriate for him to drag her along on his journeys. She certainly couldn't stay with his mother. Mary Ball Washington would neither understand nor abide Faith's precocious nature—one of his favorite things about his young friend. He'd hate to see it squashed.

His heart ached to think of her dealing with the loss of both parents. Faith was strong, but their family had been very close. Much closer than George had ever felt with his.

A knock at the door brought his attention back to the room. Mary—Mrs. Lytton's maid—came toward George. "I am sorry to bother you, sir"—she bowed—"but young Faith wants no one but you. She has done nothing but cry, and we cannot convince her to eat or sleep."

George straightened and nodded. "Let me accompany you back to the house and see what I can do." He turned to the solicitor. "Is there anything else that needs my attention at the moment?"

"No." He gathered his things. "I will bring the papers to you in the morning."

"Thank you." George bowed and then kissed his mother's cheek before heading out the door. As he walked the short distance between the two farms, a new idea formed. Maybe a change

of scenery would be good for Faith. The Martins in Boston didn't have any children and George trusted them with his life. Would they take Faith in for the rest of her upbringing? If they'd be willing, she could have the finest of schooling and tutors and would be surrounded by the best society had to offer. He'd have to get a letter off immediately.

But if he moved Faith to Boston, it would be difficult for him to visit as often. Unless he chose a different line of work. An option that held some appeal.

Stepping into the Lyttons' parlor, his eyes watered. Smoke still hung in the air. Faith couldn't stay here. Neither should the servants. On the settee, Faith was curled up into a ball, her dress still covered in dirt from her jaunty game of war, and her arms wrapped around her mother's shawl. With swollen green eyes, she looked up at him. Tears streamed down her face in silent rivers of pain.

George understood the heartache etched into her features all too well. He reached for her hand. "Let us go for a walk, shall we?"

She nodded and took his hand but kept the shawl tucked under her other arm.

They headed toward the apple orchard. One of her favorite places.

Silence stretched between them for a good while as he led her to a little hill and settled down on the grass. The air was sweet and fresh. Faith sat beside him and rested her head on his arm.

Unsure of where to begin or how to reach her broken heart, George thought it best to be honest. "I lost my father when I was about your age."

She nodded against his arm.

"It devastated me, and I felt lost for a long time. But the good Lord above saw me through."

Faith began to sob.

“It is not within my power to bring them back or take away the pain, dear girl. But I can promise that I will do my best to take care of you and make certain that all is well for your future.”

“I do not want to stay here right now. It scares me. Can I go with you?”

Exactly the question he’d expected from her. He sighed. “I don’t think so, but I have an idea. It may take me a bit to arrange everything. But I will make sure you are happy and well.”

“You will send me away?” She sounded resigned. Her tone so matter of fact, even though he noticed the quiver of her lower lip.

“It will not be like that, little Faith. I have trusted friends in Boston. If they are in agreement with my plan, I think it will be the perfect place for you to be for a while.”

She nodded. “I do not like the thought of being so far away, but I do not want to be here right now. Maybe not ever.” A small sigh made her shudder. “Will you come visit?”

“Yes.”

“And write letters? Like before?”

“Yes. I will even write more often.”

She tucked her hand back into his. “It hurts really bad, George.”

“I know.” He squeezed her hand. “But the ache will ease a bit over time. And you will always have your wonderful memories. Your parents were the finest people I’ve ever known.”

Sniffing, she sat up. “I want them back.” Her voice cracked.

It was hard to imagine that mere hours ago, he’d watched Faith be carried on her team’s shoulders in victory. Independent and strong-willed, the young girl had cried, “Victory or death!”

The contrast now was chilling. She seemed smaller and fragile, as if she could shatter into a million pieces at any moment.

Loss could do that. But could that fiery, fearless leader come back from such a blow? He hated to see her defeated and worn.

He'd have to do everything he could to help Faith survive and become vibrant once again.

Maybe they both needed to leave Virginia for a while.

Boston sounded better the more he thought about it.

"George?"

"Yes?"

"I'm an orphan now, aren't I."

His heart felt like it stopped for a breath as he looked into Faith's sad eyes. What could he possibly say to her to help ease the pain? "No." The sigh that left his lips felt heavy. "You are a child of our heavenly Father, so you are never truly an orphan. And don't forget. . .you have me." He tapped her nose like he used to when she was just a toddler following him around. "You will always have me while I'm here on this earth."

"I completely trust *you*, George." She took in a shaky breath and wiped tears from her cheeks. "But I do not like that God took my parents from me."

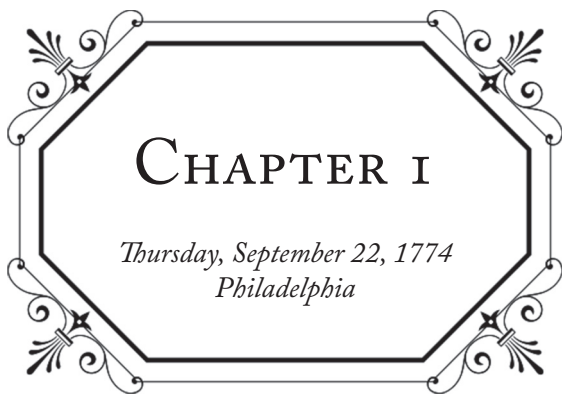
The hurt and anger in her voice surprised him, but he knew it would stay with her for a while. It was part of grieving someone you loved. But George sat up a little straighter. Part of being Faith's guardian meant steering her in the truth. "I do not believe that God *took* your parents from you, Faith. And He's far more trustworthy than I am. But I will do my best to be His representative here—to show you how good He is."

"I feel very alone."

He wrapped an arm around her shoulders. "You are never alone, my friend."

"But what about when you leave?"

"God will be with you. I promise."



CHAPTER I

Thursday, September 22, 1774
Philadelphia

Matthew Weber sat hidden in the corner of Charles Thomson's study and waited for word from him. Charles was not only a good friend but the secretary of the Continental Congress as well. His appointment as secretary had been fortuitous for them all. The plan had been to meet after the Congress so they could discuss what needed to be done next. A tap sounded on the door, and Matthew ducked deeper into the dark shadows. His heart pounded.

It wasn't the planned signal.

Who would be coming to the secretary's home tonight?

Matthew couldn't let anyone loyal to the King know he was here. And no one knew for sure when they might run into a Loyalist. It made things exceedingly difficult as the weeks passed.

A familiar face entered. A broad grin stretched across his face, Benjamin Franklin shut the door. "Matthew, I presume that is *you* hidden over there?"

Relief rushed through his veins. Shaking his head and letting his breath out in a great *whoosh*, Matthew laughed and stepped into the light. "Yes, 'tis me, Ben. But you did not use the appropriate signal, and by the way, wouldn't that have been a tad risky—mentioning my name—when you were not sure 'twas me?"

“If I had not been *sure*, yes.” The older man shook a finger at him. His gray eyes twinkling. “But Simpson acknowledged you were already here. And frankly, I wanted to see how you would handle the situation. Good show, had I not known you were here, I wouldn’t have seen you.”

“Ah, I see.” Matthew moved forward to shake Franklin’s hand still working to get his heart back to normal. “These days, we can be none too careful.” The definite need to practice at hiding and controlling his anxiousness pressed into his mind. The job before him grew more stressful by the day.

“I agree.” The older gentleman nodded several times and placed his hands behind his back as he paced the room. “ ’Tis hard to believe how things have changed over the years.”

“Yes, indeed.”

“How’s Deborah?” Matthew hadn’t seen Ben’s wife in a while.

Ben smiled. “As lovely as ever.”

“Please give her my regards. Have you spoken to William?” Matthew kept his tone low.

“No.” The instant frown and gravity of the single word gave Matthew more than enough to understand the man’s disappointment. William and Benjamin Franklin had been on different sides of the political spectrum for some time.

Matthew turned back to look at the bookshelves. “I am sorry to hear that.”

“I appreciate your sincerity, but you know William. This is, I fear, what comes from a thirst for power.” Franklin took a deep breath and then let it out in a long sigh. “Back to business, how are you, dear boy?”

A slight smile lifted his lips. Only Benjamin Franklin could think of him—a thirty-six-year-old man—as a dear boy. “I am faring quite well.”