

**THE SUNSET OF  
GEORGE WASHINGTON:**

**A Drama in Two Acts**

**Scott Campbell Brown**



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**History, United States Revolutionary Period  
(1775-1800)**

*This play is also dedicated to my lovely wife, Donna, who always gives me wise advice. Maybe I can get it right this time.*

## **DRAMATIS PERSONAE**

General George Washington, former President of the  
United States of America

Martha (Patsy) Washington, his Wife

Hercules Posey, his Master Chef

Tobias Lear, his Secretary

Oney Judge, her Seamstress

Patrick Henry, Master Orator and former Governor of the  
Commonwealth of Virginia

General John Marshall, Lawyer for General Washington

Thomas Jefferson, Author of the Declaration of  
Independence and United States Vice-President

James (Jemmy) Madison, Author of the Constitution and a  
former Representative from Virginia

Phillis Wheatley, a Poet

Primus Hall, an Educator and former Soldier in the  
American Revolutionary War

Delia Posey, the Daughter of Hercules



## ACT ONE, 1797-1798

### Scene 1

*Mount Vernon. Enter General George Washington (GW), followed by Tobias Lear, his Secretary*

*GW: Hercules! Hercules!*

*Enter Martha (Patsy) Washington*

*Patsy: Hercules is gone, my dearest husband.*

*GW: Hercules! Ah, Patsy, has he absconded? Is he gone? He has betrayed his sworn fidelity to me.*

*Patsy: I shall ascertain the circumstances of his absence. Exit Patsy*

*GW: Hercules! Hercules! Ah, Hercules, do you remember five years ago? I remember.*

*Enter Hercules Posey*

*Hercules: I remember. I am Hercules Posey. I am a free man. Of late, I served as the chief cook for George Washington. I remember years ago, my slave Master, then President Washington was informed by his secretary, Tobias Lear...*

*Lear: Your Excellency, the United States Attorney General has ruled that any slaves brought here to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and who remain for six months may claim their freedom.*

*GW: Mr. Lear, I serve as President of the United States of America in its capital city of Philadelphia.*

*Lear: Your reason to bring slaves to Philadelphia is irrelevant. The law applies to all slaves brought here by any government official, even Your Excellency.*

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*GW:* Although I do not think the slaves would benefit, this freedom might be too great a temptation for them. If they perceive they have a right to freedom, it might make them hostile!

*Lear:* Your Excellency, my strongest conviction is that their situation with you is far preferable to what they would probably obtain in a state of freedom.

*GW:* Well, then, if any of my slaves attempt to become free at the expiration of six months in Pennsylvania, it is my wish and desire that you would send them home.

*Lear:* Please, permit me now to declare that no consideration should induce me to take any steps to prolong the slavery of a human being, had I not the fullest confidence that they will at some future period be liberated.

*GW:* Mr. Lear, I have a motive, more powerful than others, to liberate that certain species of property which I possess, very repugnant to my own feelings. I am very well disposed to do it, but necessity compels my possession, until I can substitute something to defray the expenses that are not in my power to avoid! *Re-enter Patsy*

*Patsy:* Three of our Negroes have given notice that they will take advantage of the law in this Commonwealth of Pennsylvania tomorrow. They will claim their freedom!

*GW:* Is Hercules one?

*Patsy:* No, but he might follow the example of those three after a residence of six months!

*GW:* Perhaps. Mr. Lear, what must we do?

*Lear:* Your Excellency, propose to Hercules that he will be needed at home in June when you return.

*Patsy:* Aye. If Hercules should decline the offer which will be made to him of going home, it will be a

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pretty strong proof of his intention to take the advantage of the law after six months.

*Hercules:* When they did so, I turned to them and stated: Although I make not the least objection to going to Mount Vernon, I am mortified to the last degree to think that a suspicion could be entertained of my fidelity or attachment to you!

*Patsy:* Hercules, I am pleased. Your feelings appear so strong that I am left with no doubt of your sincerity.

*Hercules:* It has been insinuated to me that your motive for sending me home so long before you will return to Mount Vernon is to prevent me from taking the advantage of a six months residence in Pennsylvania to obtain my freedom.

*Patsy:* Hercules, to show you that there are no apprehensions of any kind entertained of you, you need not go back to Mount Vernon at this time. Remain 'till the expiration of six months and then go home. *Exit Patsy and Hercules*

*Lear:* And so, he did.

*GW:* Aye, Mr. Lear, I remember. At one time, the Marquis de Lafayette purchased an estate in the Colony of Cayenne with a view of emancipating the slaves on it. It was a generous and noble proof of his humanity. The benevolence of his heart was so conspicuous. Would to God a similar spirit would Bless all the people of this country, but I despair of seeing it. Petitions were presented to the Assembly of Virginia for the abolition of slavery, but they could scarcely obtain a reading.

*Lear:* It appears, your Excellency, that Hercules has now not waited for such an abolition. One of that

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certain species of property which you possess has liberated himself.

*Re-enter Patsy*

*GW:* With respect to the species of property, I shall frankly declare to you that I do not like even to think, much less talk of it.

*Patsy:* Two of the species of property! We have lost Hercules just now; and, in less than a year after my Oney Judge left. She has been my attendant since she was ten years old. She was handy and useful to me, being perfect a mistress of her needle.

*Enter Oney Judge*

*Oney:* I am Oney Judge. I am a free woman. I was a chambermaid for Mrs. Washington, who was always good to me. When General Washington was elected President, I was taken to Philadelphia. Although used to work, I did not want to be a slave always. I wanted to be free. I understood that after the decease of my master and mistress, I was to become the property of a granddaughter of hers. If I went back to Virginia, I would never have a chance of escape. Last year, they were packing up to return to Virginia from Philadelphia. Whilst they were packing, I packed to go north. I didn't know where I was packing to go; for I knew that if I went back to Virginia, I should never get my liberty. I had friends among the colored people of Philadelphia and had my things carried there beforehand. I left Washington's house while they were eating dinner.

*Patsy:* Soon after she left, we placed the following advertisement, "Absconded from the household of the President of the United States, Oney Judge, a light mulatto girl, much freckled, with very black eyes and bushy hair. She is of middle stature, slender, and delicately formed, about 20 years of age. She has many changes of good clothes."



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*GW:* We wrote, “As there was no suspicion of her going off, nor no provocation to do so, it is not easy to conjecture whither she has gone, or fully, what her design is. She may attempt to escape by water. All masters of vessels are cautioned against admitting her. It is probable she will attempt to pass for a free woman, and has, it is said, wherewithal to pay her passage. Ten dollars will be paid to any person who will bring her home!”

*Oney:* I came on board a ship bounded to Portsmouth, New Hampshire. I will never tell the name of the Captain, lest they should punish him for bringing me away.

*Patsy:* The ingratitude of the girl, who was brought up and treated more like a child than a servant! She ought not to escape with impunity!

*GW:* I made inquiries to persons to recover and send her back!

*Oney:* Persons representing General Washington have contacted me. I have expressed to them my great affection and reverence for my master and mistress. Without hesitation, I have declared my willingness to return and serve during the lives of General and Mrs. Washington, if I could be freed upon their decease, should I outlive them. But I would rather suffer death than return to slavery and liable to be sold or given to any other person!

*Exit Oney*

*Patsy:* I regret that the attempt made to recover the girl, who, without the least provocation absconded from me, was unsuccessful. She dares to place conditions on her return! Such a compromise is totally inadmissible!

*GW:* As disposed I might be to even an entire emancipation of those people, it would not be just to reward unfaithfulness. This would discontent all her fellow

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servants; who, by their steady adherence, are far more deserving than herself.

*Patsy:* I am ill-disposed to any emancipation!

*GW:* Ah, I fear for the worst, Patsy. Hercules knew that our last journey to Philadelphia would be our final travels. For him, the idea of freedom might have been too great a temptation to resist. He might have discerned that our last travel would have constituted his final chance at emancipation in Philadelphia. To prevent our loss of the use of him, I left him here at Mount Vernon.

*Patsy:* He has foiled your plan and absconded. I am told that Hercules departed on Feb. 21<sup>st</sup> or 22<sup>nd</sup>. Such a present for your birthday!

*GW:* Mr. Lear, I pray you to make all the enquiry you can after Hercules, to send him here if he can be discovered and apprehended.

*Lear:* I shall, your Excellency. *Exit Lear*

*GW:* Ah, Patsy!

*Patsy:* What is the matter, dearest?

*GW:* My teeth have worked loose. Two or three of them have broken altogether. Although I now make use of another set of teeth, they are loose in my mouth.

*Patsy:* They bulge your lips out in such a way to make them appear considerably swollen. They must not be changed in any way that will force your lips out more than now. It does this too much already.

*GW:* The bars on the sides are too wide, and too projecting for the parts they rest upon. This causes both my upper and under lip to bulge out, as if swollen. My teeth are giving way. They have been weakened.

*Patsy:* My poor, great husband.

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*GW:* My teeth remind me of my years. Patsy, the remainder of my life, in the course of nature, cannot be long. It is not likely that I ever shall travel more than twenty miles from here. I do not wish to mix again in the great world, or to partake in its politics. I wish to occupy my life in rural amusements and seclude myself, as much as possible, from the noisy and bustling crowd. Yet, I am not without my regrets at parting with, perhaps never more to meet, the few people whom I love. From time to time, I would have visitors and be happy to be regaled by the company of those I esteem.

*Patsy:* The prospect of your retirement, here with me in Mount Vernon, is most grateful to my soul. But how shall we suffer our losses, our health, our servants? Moreover, this violent cold, taken in Philadelphia, hangs upon me still! Why has this all happened?

*GW:* Patsy, religion and morality are the essential pillars of civic society. Yet, it is not for us to scan the wisdom of Providence. The best we can do is to submit to its decrees. Reason, religion and philosophy teach us to do this, but 'tis time alone that can ameliorate the pangs of humanity and soften its woes. *Exit GW and Patsy*

### **Scene 2**

*The City of Richmond. Enter former Governor of Virginia Patrick Henry (PH) and General John Marshall, a Lawyer for George Washington*

*PH:* Well met, General John Marshall!

*John:* Indeed, Governor Patrick Henry.

*PH:* How fares your illustrious client?

*John:* General Washington?

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*PH:* Aye, the former President. I am concerned to see our old commander-in-chief most abusively treated. Nor are his long and great services remembered. His character as our leader during the Revolutionary War was above all praise. If he is now so roughly handled in his old age, what may be expected by any other person?

*John:* I agree. Yet, the General is very well. He is, however, concerned with the differences between the United States of America and the French Republic.

*PH:* The recent attacks on our ships by France?

*John:* Aye. I have never heard him speak with so much candor, nor such heat.

*PH:* As he should. Think not that I mean to flatter General Washington when I praise his wise caution in avoiding an increase in our connection with the French during the early stages of their own Revolution. Unlike ours, the French Revolution was wrought against the will of a great portion, if not a majority, of their people. Candor obliges me to acknowledge that, at the time, I was among the number of blind and deluded. And I thank Heaven that our government was guided by a clearer intellect, with a greater foresight than mine, General Washington. But now, how do you fare?

*John:* Well, Governor. However, in confidence, President Adams has entreated me to consider travelling abroad and serving in the commission of envoys to accommodate our differences with France.

*PH:* General Washington must expect you to decline.

*John:* Of course. When General Washington was President, he offered me Federal office three times, without success.

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*PH:* As Peter did to Jesus, you denied him three times.

*John:* That is true. Yet, he retains me as his lawyer. Governor, you and I are friends, although we differed on our Constitution.

*PH:* Aye. I opposed the Constitution in its unaltered form. I looked on it as the most fatal plan that could possibly be conceived to enslave a free people. I fought it with all that I had. But when the Constitution was ratified, you heard me implore my comrades, as true and faithful men, to go home! Since that time, you and I have worked together from time to time.

*John:* Indeed. Upon its passage, I felt that the great principles which I considered essential were secured. I willingly relinquished public life to devote myself to my profession of the law.

*PH:* And yet?

*John:* Governor, again, in confidence, this offer from President Adams marks the first time in my life that I have ever hesitated concerning the acceptance of office. My resolution and desire to remain in my profession as a lawyer is unchanged.

*PH:* Yet, you do feel a very deep interest in our controversy with France.

*John:* Yes, I do wish for the adjustment of our differences with that republic.

*PH:* The subject is familiar to you...

*John:* ...And has occupied a large portion of my thoughts. I will confess that the goal of a successful termination of the differences between our two countries influences me to a great extent. And I must confess that,

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my ambition, though limited, is not absolutely extinguished.

*PH, laughing:* Consider that the mission will be temporary. It cannot be of long duration. You will return, after a short absence, to your profession, with no reduction in your practice.

*John:* My clients would know immediately that I would soon return. I can make necessary arrangements with the gentlemen of the bar to prevent my business from suffering in the meantime. These considerations could well help me to decide.

*PH:* Remember and consider those men who are blind to the duplicity of France, as well as to the dangers which grow out of the current state of suspense and indecision.

*John:* Such as?

*PH:* Gentlemen, such as our illustrious Vice-President and author of the Declaration of Independence, Mr. Jefferson!

*John:* And my kin. Aye, I shall remember him and perform my duty.

*PH:* General Washington would be envious of President Adams' success in your recruitment as an envoy to France. But he shall also rejoice. Shall we retire to share a glass of your beloved Madeira and toast General Washington?

*John:* With pleasure. His Excellency is a superb man who should be toasted by all. Even the King of England has stated that the act by General Washington of relinquishing power and retiring to his farm placed him in a light the most distinguished of any man living! Even he thinks him the greatest character of the age! *Exit*

*PH and John*

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## **Scene 3**

*Monticello. Enter Vice-President Thomas Jefferson (TJ) and former Representative James (Jemmy) Madison*

*TJ:* Well met, Mr. James Madison!

*Jemmy:* And you, Mr. Vice-President Jefferson. Did you enjoy your inauguration?

*TJ:* Indeed, but our new President John Adams did not.

*Jemmy:* How so?

*TJ:* Mr. Adams wrote to his wife that that General Washington seemed to enjoy a triumph over him. He even had a dream that Washington thought, "I am fairly out and you fairly in! See which of us will be happiest."

*Jemmy:* And your parting with the General?

*TJ:* My last parting with General Washington was at the inauguration of Mr. Adams in March 1797. It was warmly affectionate between us. I don't have any reason to believe there has been any change on his part, as there certainly is none on mine. Of course, Mr. Adams is correct in his assessment of his troubles. General Washington's departure will mark the moment when the difficulties begin. And they will all be ascribed to the new Adams administration.

*Jemmy:* Why so?

*TJ:* Mr. Madison, former President Washington was fortunate to get off as the bubble is bursting, leaving others to hold the bag. He will have his usual good fortune of reaping credit from the good acts of others and leaving to them that of his errors.

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*Jemmy:* Has he bequeathed to Adams the error of a Federalist dalliance with England that shall lead to war with France?

*TJ:* Perhaps. Most of our citizens are clearly of anti-Federalist sentiment. The minority opinion, when traced to the true source, only derives from the great popularity of that one great character.

*Jemmy:* Washington?

*TJ, nodding:* That influence once withdrawn...

*Jemmy:* Washington?

*TJ, nodding:* Once that influence is withdrawn and our countrymen are left to their own unbiassed good senses, I have no doubt we shall see a pretty rapid return of general harmony. Our citizens will move in the paths of regular liberty, order and a sacrosanct adherence to the Constitution. Thus, I think it will be if war with France can be avoided.

*Jemmy:* How can the influence of Washington be withdrawn?

*TJ:* That, my dear Mr. Madison, is the problem. My ability to appeal to General Washington has been weakened by the recent thievery and publication by the Federalists of my letter to an Italian physician, Dr. Philip Mezzei.

*Jemmy:* How so?

*TJ:* My dear Jemmy, listen to my words, "In place of that noble love of liberty and republican government which carried us triumphantly through the war, an Anglican, monarchical and aristocratical party has sprung up...Against us are the Executive...It would give you a fever were I to name to you the apostates who have gone over to these heresies, men who were Samsons in the field



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and Solomons in the council, but who have had their heads shorn by the harlot England!”

*Jemmy:* Those are strong words, my friend. What will you do?

*TJ:* It is impossible for me to explain this publicly without bringing on more differences between General Washington and myself, which nothing before the publication of this letter has ever done.

*Jemmy:* I have viewed this subject pretty much in the way you do. I consider it ticklish.

*TJ:* Moreover, any explanation would embroil me also with all those with whom his character is still popular, that is, nine tenths of the people of the US. And what good would be obtained? Very little indeed to counterbalance a good deal of harm!

*Jemmy:* While some think that honest men would be encouraged by your owning and justifying the letter to Mazzei, I rather suspect it would be a triumph for their and your opponents. More converts would be gained by the popularity of General Washington.

*TJ:* If I remain silent, no one can infer that I am afraid to own the general sentiments of my letter.

*Jemmy:* Indeed, President Washington was silent for many years on any letters imputed to him.

*TJ:* Moreover, from a very early period of my life, I made it a rule never to write a word for the newspapers. From this, I have never departed in a single instance! When all the world seemed to be writing, I can say with truth that I never communicated a line to the press. Washington knew this but did not believe it. Many years ago, when I served as his Secretary of State, we argued.

*Enter GW*

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*GW:* When I served as President, I made numerous attempts to bring the Secretaries of State and Treasury, Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton together.

*TJ:* A fruitless attempt!

*GW:* Please let me express my earnest wish that you and the Secretary of the Treasury unite with each other on government policies.

*TJ:* My actions are of much less importance than you seem to imagine.

*GW:* I implore you!

*TJ:* I have kept myself aloof from all public expressions on the actions of the government.

*GW:* Alexander Hamilton has expressed his readiness to join with you.

*TJ:* I have seen and spoken with as few as I could.

*GW:* I think such a coalition between yourself and Secretary Hamilton would gain the admiration of the public.

*TJ:* As to a coalition with Mr. Hamilton, if, by that you mean that either of us is willing to sacrifice his opinions to the other, that is impossible. We both, no doubt, have formed our conclusions after the most mature consideration.

*GW:* I am no man of a political party.

*TJ:* I also really dislike political conversation and, therefore, I avoid it wherever I can.

*GW:* The first wish of my heart is that if parties must exist, we should reconcile them.

*TJ:* But the principles conscientiously adopted cannot be given up by either Mr. Hamilton or myself. Yet,

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some use this disagreement to sow discord between you and me.

*GW:* Many of your friends continue to denounce me as someone under a dangerous influence of another person and that, if I would listen more to some other opinions, all would be well. Yet, you know that I am no believer in the infallibility of the politics or measures of any man living. You know that there were many instances of my having decided against the opinions of Mr. Hamilton!

*TJ:* Yet many of his friends say that I am engaged in intrigue against your government.

*GW:* As you have brought up the subject yourself, it would not be frank, candid or friendly for me to conceal that your conduct has been represented as departing from those opinions that I thought you had of me.

*TJ:* I never have believed for a moment that this could make any impression on you. Your knowledge of me should outweigh the slanders.

*GW:* My answer to everyone always has been, that nothing in the conduct of Mr. Jefferson has raised any suspicions in my mind of his insincerity.

*TJ:* Nor should it. At the same time, I have never conceived that serving in public life requires me to conceal my opinions. When I am led by conversation to express them, I do it with the same independence here which I have practiced everywhere.

*GW:* Enough of this. I have already gone farther in the expression of my feelings than I ever intended. It is almost impossible for me to convey and express to you the extreme wretchedness of my existence while in this office! If you would review my public conduct, you will know that truth and right decisions have been my sole objectives.

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*Exit GW*

*TJ:* Hence, Mr. Madison, I will not write on the subject of Mezzei; or anything else to do with Washington, for that matter. However, there may yet be the form of a rebuttal. My nephew tells me that he has penned a most interesting letter to the former President.

*Jemmy:* A letter?

*TJ:* Mr. Madison, let us observe the future, and yet, speak of this no more. *Exit TJ and Jemmy*

## **Scene 4**

*Mount Vernon. Enter GW and John*

*GW, reading:* “It would give you a fever were I to name to you the apostates who have gone over to these heresies, men who were Samsons in the field and Solomons in the council, but who have had their heads shorn by the harlot England!”

*John:* Your Excellency, Vice-President Jefferson confuses neutrality with hostility towards France.

*GW:* Aye, General Marshall. Yet, the conduct of the French government is so much beyond calculation and so unaccountable to any principle of justice, that I shall not now puzzle my brains attempting to discern their motives. I have always maintained that Europe has a set of primary interests, which are foreign to us. Our true policy must steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world!

*John:* And with such purpose in mind, I shall repair to Philadelphia and then abroad.

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*GW:* General Marshall, you are well worthy of my friendship and confidence. You are a firm friend, standing upon the true principles of our country. Moreover, you are sensible and discreet.

*John:* Your Excellency, these expressions of your favorable opinion of me add to my conviction that you still feel a deep interest in all that concerns our country to whose service you have devoted so large a portion of your life. Please allow me to offer you such occasional communications as, while in Europe, I may be enabled to make. I hope too that the offer will not be deemed an unacceptable or unwelcome intrusion on you.

*GW:* I accept your offer. I value you as one of our compatriots in arms in the American Revolution.

*John:* In our War for Independence, I found myself associated with brave men from different States who were risking life and everything valuable in a common cause believed by all to be most precious. It was there where I was confirmed in the habit of considering America as my country.

*GW:* You and I went into the war as Virginians and we came out of it as Americans. My general orders of the 20<sup>th</sup> of November 1777, do you remember?

*John:* By heart, "Lieutenant John Marshall is...appointed Deputy Judge Advocate in the Army of the United States..."

*GW:* "...and is to be respected as such." Now, you are General Marshall. Is it possible for a gentleman to have higher rank than concurrent General and Marshall? You are a man of great worth, and of the best disposition.

*John:* ...And, perhaps unfortunately, a lawyer.

*GW:* But more honorable than others, many here in the Commonwealth of Virginia. It is my firm belief, that

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no occurrence or event will change the opinions or the conduct of some other characters amongst us.

*John:* I am sorry that some are my cousins.

*GW:* Although this is regretted by those of us who think differently, yet, having taken my seat in the shade of my Vine and Fig tree, I shall attempt to view things in the “calm lights of mild philosophy.” I am persuaded that if ever a crisis should arise to call forth the good sense and spirit of the people, they shall rise to the occasion.

*John:* I agree with you, sir. Therefore, please receive my warm and grateful acknowledgements for the polite and, allow me to add, friendly wishes which you have expressed to me. With those sentiments, I shall take my leave.

*GW:* Go to defend the country against the outrages that French have sustained on our commerce. Let our own rights be claimed and maintained, with your dignified firmness. *Enter Patsy*

*Patsy:* General Marshall, must you take your leave now?

*John:* Aye, Mrs. Washington. Thank you for your hospitality. I must this morning leave from Mount Vernon, which is certainly one of the most delightful places in our country. Farewell, your Excellency. Mrs. Washington.

*GW:* Godspeed.

*Patsy:* Farewell, General Marshall. *Exit John*

*GW:* Dearest Patsy, we are all on litter and dirt, occasioned by Joiners, Masons and Painters, working in the house; all parts of which as well, as the out buildings, I find, upon examination, to be exceedingly out of Repair. How goes our internal affairs in the kitchen?

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*Patsy:* The inconvenience I am put to since the loss of my cook is very great. It is now rendered still more severe for want of a steward. The person we have now is totally inadequate to the purpose for which he was employed. He possesses some valuable characteristics. I believe he is thoroughly honest, sober and careful. He is obliging in the extreme, but he knows nothing of cooking, arranging a table or servants, nor will he assume any authority over them. Indeed, he cannot understand them, nor they him.

*GW:* I readily conceive then that much confusion ensues.

*Patsy:* I am greatly distressed and fatigued. We must obtain a new man. Drudgery duties either in the kitchen or house would not be required of him. To superintend both duties and make others perform the duties allotted them is all that would be asked of him.

*GW:* Who shall he supervise?

*Patsy:* There are always two persons, a man and woman, in the kitchen; and servants enough in the house for all needs. They require supervision in all cases. He must be trustworthy, careful of what is committed to him, sober and attentive. It is more important among blacks, many of whom will impose when they can do it.

*GW:* Mr. Lear!

*Enter Lear*

*Lear:* Your Excellency?

*GW:* We shall publish an advertisement. Write down, "Wanted, at Mount Vernon, a house-keeper, competent to all the duties of that office, in a large family. For such, one hundred and fifty dollars per annum will be allowed...or...in place of a housekeeper, a household steward, well acquainted with the duties of a butler, and skilled in the art of cookery (the manual part of which

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would not be required of him) would be employed at the above, or greater wages, if his qualifications entitle him to them.”

*Patsy:* No person should apply personally, or by letter, who cannot produce the most satisfactory evidence of his, or her sobriety and integrity, as well as fitness in other respects!

*GW:* Yes, mark that down, Mr. Lear.

*Patsy:* Thank you, my dearest. I shall let you attend to your affairs but shall be nearby if you should need me. *Exit Patsy*

*GW:* What news, Mr. Lear?

*Lear:* I have a letter for you from John Langhorne.

*GW:* Who is John Langhorne?

*Lear:* I know not.

*GW:* Mr. Langhorne, who to me, in person and character, is an entire stranger. Read the letter to me.

*Lear, reading:* “When a man of distinguished worth suffers unmerited calumny, it has the same effect as an eclipse of the sun, which serves only to make it admired the more. While it shines in unvaried light, and splendor, it shines unnoticed; but when it is obscured by some sudden and unexpected darkness, it attracts our attention...Such will be the only effect you will experience from those unjust aspersions which have been lately thrown upon you. Nothing but truth can possibly last. They will vanish and leave behind them a more than usual luster. There is no cause then, why you should distress, or even disturb yourself a moment concerning them...Is your peace to be broken because there are fools and knaves in the world? Is it possible that you may suffer as much from the villainy of others in this respect, as you could do from your own



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demerit? Of what use then is virtue? Of what use is the consciousness of uniform integrity, if it will not produce the only end both of wisdom and virtue, which is our own proper quiet and happiness? Certainly, under the direction of a right philosophy, it could not fail of producing both. It is in vain to labor, if we refuse to enjoy the fruits, or effects of our industry. Would it not be absurd, after we had cultivated a garden, to deprive ourselves of the enjoyment of its fruits and flowers, because some malicious neighbor had reported that it was over-run with weeds?

*GW, laughing:* It would be impossible.

*Lear:* “Impossible, you say! It would be perfectly ridiculous. It is most true: and not less ridiculous, not less unreasonable and absurd would it be, for a virtuous man to forfeit that happiness to which his virtue entitles him, because malevolence has branded him with unjust accusations. Till there shall be a possibility of banishing from human society all envy, all dishonesty, and all ill-nature, it would be unwise to make ourselves miserable about their effects. Let those effects always be confined to the objects from whence they proceed; there it is only that they ought to be, and there it is, generally, that they are productive of misery... These observations have been made, Sir, in the hope that they might possibly administer some comfort, to a mind, eminently great, and virtuous; not, in the belief, that the calumnies against you, have absolutely disturbed your peace, but in the possibility, that at some time, they might for a moment over-cloud your happiness, which ought to be dear to every good man. I am, Sir, with the highest sentiments of esteem for your person, and veneration for your character your very humble servant.”

*GW:* Patrick Henry once said, “I smelt a rat.”

*Lear:* What will you do?

## ***THE SUNSET OF GEORGE WASHINGTON***

*GW:* Let us write back, “For the favorable sentiments you have been pleased to express relative to my conduct in public life, I thank you. So far as these attacks are aimed at me personally, I can assure you that it is a misconception if one supposes that I feel the venom of the darts. Within me, I have a consolation which proves an antidote against their utmost malice. This renders my mind in the retirement I have long panted after, perfectly tranquil.”

*Lear:* I shall post it.

*Exit Lear*

*GW:* It will appear from my answer to his letter, that our Mr. Langhorne shall fall far short of his mark.

*Exit GW*

### **Scene 5**

*Monticello. Enter TJ and Jemmy*

*TJ, reading:* “Within me, I have a consolation which proves an antidote against their utmost malice.” Washington always plays his part well.

*Jemmy:* What part is that?

*TJ:* General George Washington, the man above the fray. Yet, the firm tone of his mind, for which he had been remarkable, has relaxed. A listlessness has crept upon him. He lets others think and act for him.

*Jemmy:* Such as Alexander Hamilton.

*TJ:* Aye. Yet, let him remain above the fray while we act. Though we hear nothing official from our envoys at Paris, the rumors are very unfavorable. I begin to fear that they will refuse to have any settlement with us. This may excite a war cry with us. I fear mischief from John

## ***THE SUNSET OF GEORGE WASHINGTON***

Marshall. I regret ever having signed his license to practice law. *Enter John*

*John:* I, John Marshall, Gentleman, obtained a license from his Excellency Governor Thomas Jefferson of the Commonwealth of Virginia to practice law, presented it to the court and took my oaths.

*TJ:* Gentleman indeed! In days past, I enjoyed the game of billiards. Hence, I had built a room expressly for that purpose at Monticello. Around that time, Marshall spent all his days gaming, especially at billiards. His practice at law dwindled and his friends all subsequently complained to the legislature. Shortly thereafter, the legislature outlawed billiards, making my table illegal and of no use. I now must convert the room to a ball room.

*Jemmy:* I have heard it said that John Marshall is "...a promising young man of the law" and "...a young man of rising character."

*TJ:* Poppycock! His lax lounging manners have made him popular with the bulk of the people in Richmond, but a profound buffoon to any thinking man in the Commonwealth of Virginia! Had he not been appointed minister to France he would have been forced to sell his estate. His appointment was the greatest Godsend that could ever have befallen a man. He was desperate!

*Jemmy:* So, is there no news of him?

*TJ:* We receive this day news of some stern demands to our envoys by the French. We are willing to hope that France will not push her resentments to a declaration of war. Our situation is truly perilous!

*John:* The failure of our attempts at negotiation is generally known...As soon as I became perfectly convinced that our efforts at conciliation would fail, I proposed that we should address the French. We would

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review fully the complaints of the two countries against each other and present our view of the controversy. My motive for this was that, if the effort failed, it would show the sincerity with which we had labored to achieve the objects of our mission. It could not fail to bring the controversy fairly before the American People and convince them of the earnestness with which the American government sought a reconciliation with France.

*TJ:* Our envoys have been heard. Their pretensions are great.

*John:* We ask for a suspension of all further proceedings against American vessels!

*TJ:* He must not irritate the French government! They might take umbrage! Indeed, some of the French suggest submission to a heavy bribe. These overtures have been through informal agents.

*John:* Such a proposition is an absolute surrender of the independence of the United States! These terms are inadmissible!

*TJ:* These communications do not present one reason to go to war.

*John:* This amounts to a surrender of the independence of our country! I will not consent to any proposition of the sort! I despise it! *Exit John*

*TJ, holding his head:* Whatever chance we might have had for to avoid war lessens daily. This irritation is unbearable! Indeed, some of the war-members are ready to declare war themselves.

*Jemmy:* Mr. Jefferson?

*TJ:* This almost constant headache with which I have been persecuted!

*Jemmy:* Let us retire to a quiet room.

## ***THE SUNSET OF GEORGE WASHINGTON***

*TJ:* My thanks to you, Jemmy. I shall take grains  
of calomel tonight. *Exit TJ and Jemmy*

### **Scene 6**

*Mount Vernon. Enter GW and Lear*

*GW:* It is time, now, Mr. Lear, to hear what the reception of our Envoys at Paris has been; and what their prospects are. The Government has received no missives from our Envoys at Paris since their arrival there. What news have you?

*Lear:* None from the envoys. However, you may be interested in this letter from Colonel John Nicholas.

*GW:* He was an officer in the Revolution. Prithee, read it to me.

*Lear:* “A few weeks ago a letter came to the Post Office in this County (Albemarle) from you, directed to ‘Mr. Langhorne,’ where it lay for many days. To my great surprise however, I am just informed today that it had been sent for and demanded by a certain character. He is closely connected with some of your greatest and bitterest enemies. He claimed it was intended for him, although his name is very different indeed from Langhorne. He did, however, acknowledge that he wrote to you a few weeks ago under that signature. The only conclusion I can draw from this strange circumstance, is, that certain men are resolved to stop at nothing to promote their wicked and inglorious views. They have fallen on this last miserable deceptive means, among their other hypocritical practices to entrap you...”

*GW:* I note that located in Albemarle County is a certain Monticello Plantation.

## ***THE SUNSET OF GEORGE WASHINGTON***

*Lear:* You deduce correctly, your Excellency. Colonel Nicholas also writes, “Mr. Langhorne, if you know him not from his real name, is a favorite nephew of your very sincere friend Mr. Jefferson, raised and educated directly by himself from a child, a constant dependent and resident in his house from that period almost to the present. His sentiments, I do assure you of my own personal knowledge, are very different indeed towards you from those contained in his letter.”

*GW:* Let me reply to Colonel Nicholas, “I know not how to thank you sufficiently, for the kind intention of your obliging favor. If the object of Mr. Langhorne, who to me, in person and character, is an entire stranger, was such as you suspect, it will appear from my answer to his letter, that he fell far short of his mark.”

*Lear:* Colonel Nicholas also writes, “I told you who Mr. Langhorne is, and which of your very sincere friends he was under the guidance of. The clear proof of the vile hypocrisy of that man’s professions of friendship towards you is contained in his celebrated letter to Mazzei. He begins now to speak out, in this part of the world, a very different language from what I have formerly heard him express myself. I suspect it is different than in his past expressions to you. Under the pretense of great indifference and silence about public measures, I do now know him to be one of the most artful, intriguing, industrious and double-faced politicians in all America.”

*GW:* Nothing short of the evidence Colonel Nicholas has provided could have shaken my belief in the sincerity of a friendship by the person to whom he alludes. Yet, it corroborates evidence which I had received long before through other channels. The conduct of this man and his party are systematic, and everything and everyone that they oppose will be sacrificed, without hesitation or remorse. These actions provide the means by which the

## ***THE SUNSET OF GEORGE WASHINGTON***

Government is to be assailed and the Constitution  
destroyed!

*Enter Patsy*

*Patsy:* May I interrupt the business of the day?

*GW:* Of course, Patsy.

*Patsy:* We have not heard of Hercules our chief  
cook since he left this place. It is almost a year!

*GW:* Little doubt remains in my mind of his having  
gone to Philadelphia. He may yet be found there, if proper  
measures are employed to discover where his haunts are.  
Such efforts must take place unsuspectedly, so as not to  
alarm him.

*Patsy:* If you could accomplish this for me, it  
would render me a great service. I neither have, nor can get  
a good cook to hire.

*GW:* Aye, and I am disinclined to hold another  
slave by purchase. I have requested that indirect enquiries  
be made of those who know Hercules. If they should learn  
that he is in the city, proper measures to have him  
apprehended shall be taken. At the time one of the boats  
for Alexandria is about to set sail, he shall be put therein to  
be returned here. He will pay any expense which may be  
incurred in the execution of this business!

*Patsy:* If Hercules was to get the least hint of the  
design, he would elude all your vigilance. He is no fool.

*GW:* I have requested that, if it should be found it  
necessary, someone who is most likely to be acquainted  
with his haunts be hired to trace them out. Then, the most  
effectual mode shall be employed to secure him and to  
place him on board of one of the boats bound for  
Alexandria. There will be a strict charge to not to give him  
any opportunity of escaping. Whatever cost shall attend  
this business, I will pay.

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*Patsy:* He is worth the cost. Hercules is as highly accomplished a practitioner of the culinary arts as could be found in the United States. Yet, he is also a celebrated dandy who spends most of the one or two hundred dollars a year that he makes from the kitchen leftovers on fine clothes. In such garments, he would promenade on Philadelphia's Market Street.

*GW:* I am informed that, only about four weeks ago, that he is in that city. It is not known yet where he is, and it will be very difficult to find out in the secret manner necessary.

*Patsy:* I am certain, but please continue your enquiries after Hercules. Oh!

*GW:* What is the matter?

*Patsy:* I must have sympathy pains for you, my dearest. I have been long in expectation of receiving what has been taken away unfinished.

*GW:* Teeth.

*Patsy:* I pray that it may be done without further delay, as I am in want of them!

*GW:* 'Tis a painful malady for the two of us to share, one of many. I shall attend to it at once, Patsy.

*Patsy:* Thank you. I shall leave you to your business. *Exit Patsy*

*GW:* I am surrounded by Joiners, Masons and Painters! Such is my anxiety to get out of their hands, that I have scarcely a room to put a friend into, or to set in myself, without the music of hammers or the odoriferous smell of paint! Oh, Mr. Lear, where were we?

*Lear:* You worried about the control of a foreign nation.



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*GW:* It is as necessary sometimes to be acquainted with the worst, as to know the best that can happen in matters. I cannot, even under the unpleasant aspect of things, believe the French Government means to have a war with this country. I may be mistaken, however. You may take your leave.

*Lear:* Thank you, your Excellency. *Exit Lear*

*GW:* Could I be mistaken? I think not. France was our great ally in our Revolution against Great Britain. It has always been my belief that Providence has not led us so far in the path of independence of one nation merely to throw us into the arms of another. *Exit GW*

### **Scene 7**

*Monticello. Enter TJ and Jemmy*

*TJ:* A great ball is to be given here soon and in other great towns of the union. This is at least very indelicate. It excites uneasy sensations in some persons.

*Jemmy:* Because it is in honor of the former President Washington?

*TJ:* Nay. There is a useful distinction. The honors of the ball are not those of the President Washington, but of the General Washington.

*Jemmy:* Will you attend, Mr. Jefferson?

*TJ:* Nay, Mr. Madison. I have not been at a ball for twenty years. For a long time, I have not permitted myself to go to any entertainments of the evening, from motives of attention to my health.

## ***THE SUNSET OF GEORGE WASHINGTON***

*Jemmy:* Dolley shall insist that we attend. She adores such affairs. Yet, do these events strengthen your opponents?

*TJ:* Jemmy, it is the old practice of despots to use a part of the people to keep the rest in order. Those who have now possessed themselves of all the resources of the nation, their revenues and offices, have immense means for retaining their advantages. But our present situation is not a natural one. The body of our countrymen is substantially republican through every part of the union. It was the irresistible influence and popularity of General Washington played off by the cunning of Hamilton which turned the government over to anti-republican hands. Washington delivered it over to his successor Adams. But still, I repeat, this is not the natural state.

*Jemmy:* Perhaps this party division is necessary to induce side each to watch and debate to the people the proceedings of the other.

*TJ:* Our opponents are circumscribed within narrow limits. Their numbers will ever be the minority. They are marked, like the Jews, with such a peculiarity of character, as to constitute from that circumstance the natural division of our parties. A little patience and we shall see the reign of witches pass over, their spells dissolve, and the people recovering their true sight. The people will restore their government to its true principles. It is true that in the meantime we are suffering deeply in spirit and incurring the horrors of a war and long oppressions of enormous public debt.

*Jemmy:* If the game runs sometimes against us at home, we must have patience, till luck turns, and then we shall have an opportunity of winning back the principles we have lost.

## ***THE SUNSET OF GEORGE WASHINGTON***

*TJ:* For this is a game where principles are the stake. As I once wrote, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness; That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.” That said, Jemmy, it is hardly necessary to caution you to let nothing of mine get before the public. A single sentence got hold of by the porcupines will suffice to abuse and persecute me in their papers for months!  
*Exit TJ and Jemmy*

### **Scene 8**

*Mount Vernon. Enter GW and Lear*

*GW:* Mr. Lear, all of the money that I have raised by crops and rents, as well as received for lands sold within the last few years, to the amount of fifty thousand dollars, has scarcely been able to keep me afloat! Moreover, it is demonstrably clear, that here, on this Estate, Mount Vernon, I have more working Negroes than can be employed to any advantage in the farming System!

*Lear:* You should not sell them!

*GW:* I cannot sell the surplus because I am principled against this kind of traffic in the human species! To hire them out is almost as bad because they could not be disposed of in families to any advantage. To disperse the families, I have an aversion. To part them would be an affecting and trying event.

*Lear:* You must consider how much Mrs. Washington’s Negroes and your own are intermarried.

## ***THE SUNSET OF GEORGE WASHINGTON***

*GW:* Aye, so then, I cannot have any expectation of executing my plan so far as to carry it into complete effect in the next year. If I could succeed so far as to be enabled to give up Mrs. Washington's Negros at all, and upon terms below what impartial men shall say their hire is worth, I would wish to accomplish it.

*Lear:* Yet, under the laws of dowry, you cannot sell her Negros.

*GW:* No, I cannot. Then, things must happen when they will. For which, and other reasons, I wish no mention to be made thereof until the way is a little more open. If I could accomplish the first part of my plan, related to mine, in any manner tolerably convenient and satisfactory to all that are interested in it, I certainly would do it.

*Lear:* What will you do then?

*GW:* I cannot say. What then is to be done? I knew what must be done in the battles for our Revolution, the battles for our Constitution, the battles of our Presidency. No, the last battles were not ours. They were only mine, I suppose.

*Lear:* Your Excellency, what will you do?

*GW:* Something must be done, or I shall be ruined!

*Enter Patsy*

*Patsy:* Dearest husband what worries you?

*GW:* Oh, uh, Patsy, Mr. Lear, my mind is deeply impressed with the present situation of our public affairs. I am agitated by the outrageous conduct of France towards the United States; and at the harmful conduct of its partisans among us, who aid and abet the French. If there was anything in my power, which could be done to avert, or lessen the danger of the crisis, it should be rendered with hand and heart.

## ***THE SUNSET OF GEORGE WASHINGTON***

*Patsy:* Dearest husband, please, take no measure.

*Lear:* Your enemies are always more active and industrious than are your friends. They will endeavor to turn any act by you to their own advantage with malicious insinuations.

*GW:* Well, at present, matters appear dark. It is of utmost importance to be prepared in all areas for the worst that can happen. Yet, I cannot make up my mind for the expectation of war; or, in other words, for a formidable invasion by France. I cannot believe, although I think them capable of anything bad, that they will attempt to do more than they have done. When they perceive this country rising into resistance and that they have falsely calculated upon support from a large part of the people, they will desist. If I did not view things in this light, my mind would be infinitely more upset than it is. For if a crisis should arrive when either a sense of duty or a call from my country should leave me no choice, I would prepare for the conflict, and go with as much reluctance from my present peaceful abode, as I would go to the tombs of my ancestors.

*Lear:* Your Excellency, I have here a letter from General Marshall.

*GW:* John Marshall is a man of great worth, and of the best disposition. Pray, give it to me. *Enter John*

*John:* Before this reaches you, it will be known throughout America that no hope remains of an accommodation between France and the United States that is based on principles consistent with justice or even with the independence of our country. Our ministers have not and will not be recognized, without a stipulation that they will accede to the demands of France. Those demands are for money! *Exit John*

## ***THE SUNSET OF GEORGE WASHINGTON***

*GW*: For money? For money? Alas, Patsy, we must consider the injuries and plunder which our commerce is suffering. We must consider the affront to our national independence and dignity in the rejection of our envoys. We must think on the oppression, ruin and final destruction of all free people through this military government. We must recognize the need to arm ourselves everywhere with a strength and zeal equal to the dangers with which we are threatened. Continued patience and submission will not deliver us. Accede to the demands of France? For money? Nay. Submission is vile! Rather than allowing herself to be insulted to this degree, rather than having her freedom and independence trodden under foot, America, every American must unite. And I, though old, will pour out the last drop of blood which is yet in my veins!

**END ACT ONE**



## ACT TWO, 1798-1799

### Scene 1

*Monticello. Enter Jemmy and TJ*

*Jemmy, reading:* “From John Adams to the United States Senate, 2 July 1798. Gentlemen of the Senate

“I nominate George Washington of Mount Vernon to be Lieutenant General and Commander in Chief of all the Armies raised or to be raised in the United States.

“John Adams.”

*TJ:* All Hamilton’s doings! When Marshall returned, there is no doubt that he received more than hints from Hamilton as to the tone to be assumed. Yet, I apprehend he is not hot enough for his friends. Unfortunately, Marshall was received with the utmost celebrations.

*Jemmy:* General Washington is the hero of liberty. May his enemies have the justice to applaud his virtues and his friends have the candor to acknowledge his errors.

*TJ:* This certainly is an error, Mr. Madison. May our free nation, who cherish peace, never suffer the passions of our Rulers to plunge us into war!

*Jemmy:* We will never forget that our duties as the Guardians of our Rights. The freedom of speech; May it strike its enemies dumb. The freedom of the press, the scourge of guilty and the support of virtuous Governments. The trial by Jury; May its violators be pronounced by their country aliens to justice and traitors to liberty.

*TJ:* Armies to be raised? I have thought it would have been better for us to have continued to bear the French seizures of our vessels through the summer. After all, we

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have been suffering both from her and England the last four years and still continue to bear seizures from England. Peace would have been achieved with both. With England, we chosen peace and prudently in my opinion. With France we might have chosen peace, but we have chosen war!

*Jemmy:* May we never be duped out of our money; nor be duped into a war.

*TJ:* These observations show the truth.

*Jemmy:* Will you publish them?

*TJ:* No. My thoughts are never intended for a newspaper. At a very early period of my life, I determined never to put a sentence into any newspaper. If I were to undertake to respond to the lies of the newspapers, it would take more than all my own time and that of twenty assistants. While I should be answering one, twenty new ones would be invented. I have thought it better to trust to the justice of my countrymen, that they would judge me by what they see of my conduct on the stage where they have placed me. Yet, if we cannot speak not through the newspapers, we must address the people in another way. Perhaps I could draft a resolution for the Commonwealth of Kentucky to pass.

*Jemmy:* ...and I one for the Commonwealth of Virginia.

*TJ:* Aye, Jemmy. Let us be resolved that the several States composing the United States of America are not united on the principle of unlimited submission to their federal government. But by a compact under Constitution for the US and of Amendments thereto, the States constituted a general government for special purposes. The States delegated to that government certain definite powers, reserving, each State to itself, the rights to their own self-



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government. When so ever the federal government assumes undelegated powers, its acts are unauthoritative, void and of no force.

*Jemmy:* How are its acts voided?

*TJ:* Where powers which have not been delegated are assumed by the federal government, a nullification of the act is the rightful remedy. Every State has a natural right in cases not delegated within the compact to nullify by their own authority all assumptions of power by others within their limits.

*Jemmy:* Nullification? Of this, I am uncertain. Perhaps a better principle is that of imposition. In case of a deliberate and dangerous exercise of other powers, not granted to the federal government under the Constitution, the States, who are parties to the compact, have the right, maintaining within their respective limits, the rights and liberties pertaining to them. As the Vice-President of these United States, do you proclaim this with certainty, would you not employ the term, “impose,” rather than “nullify?”

*TJ:* Never, Mr. Madison. When the federal government assumes undelegated powers, its acts are unauthoritative, void and of no force. To the compact forming that federal government each State acceded as a State. Every State has a natural right to nullify! *Exit TJ and Jemmy*

### **Scene 2**

*Mount Vernon. Enter GW and Patsy*

*Patsy, reading:* “I nominate George Washington of Mount Vernon to be Lieutenant General and Commander in

## *THE SUNSET OF GEORGE WASHINGTON*

Chief of all the Armies raised or to be raised in the United States, John Adams.” No!

*GW:* Oh, Patsy, though now seeking the repose of retirement and the tranquil pursuit of rural affairs which my time of life requires, the love of my country will indeed suffer no abatement. Its safety and prosperity will be essential to the enjoyment of my remaining years. I can never place my private wishes over the public will. In so doing this, I cannot express strongly enough what a sacrifice of individual feeling I make to a sense of public duty.

*Patsy:* I do know what you must do.

*GW:* I have written to the President, “I had the honor to receive your announcement of my appointment. I cannot express how greatly affected I am at this new proof of public confidence, and the highly flattering way that you have communicated it. At the same time, I must not conceal from you my earnest wish, that the choice had fallen upon a man less declined in years. You know, sir, I had made the determination to close the remnant of my days in my present peaceful abode. You will therefore appreciate my feelings at so late a period of life, to leave scenes I sincerely love, to enter upon the boundless field of public action, incessant trouble and high responsibility. Every person must contribute to his country’s welfare, especially in a moment like the present, when everything we hold dear and sacred is so seriously threatened. I have finally determined to accept the Commission of Commander in Chief of the Armies of the United States, with the reserve only, that I shall not be called into the field until the Army is in a situation to require my presence. I shall not receive any emoluments annexed to the appointment.”

*Patsy:* You should be recompensed!

## *THE SUNSET OF GEORGE WASHINGTON*

*GW:* Patsy, I shall not be called into the field until the Army is in a situation to require my presence. I shall promote Colonel Alexander Hamilton to General and he shall act in my stead. Colonel Lear! *Enter Lear*

*Lear:* Your Excellency, I have never been a Colonel.

*GW:* You have served as my Secretary and, under present circumstances, shall serve as my Aide-de-Camp. Hence, you have just been so commissioned, Colonel Lear. Now, please post this letter and one to John Marshall. It is with the most ardent desire that I must see him. The crisis is important! I must converse with General Marshall on the coming elections.

*Patsy:* Do you know he will come? Mrs. Adams has said that some awful person had informed Mrs. Marshall that her husband had been arrested and thrown into prison in France. This false information had such an effect on her as to deprive her of her senses. She has remained delirious ever since.

*GW:* I heard this. When he returned, I rejoiced to hear of General Marshall's arrival and wished to welcome him here. I regretted exceedingly that it would not be in my power to see him on his way to Richmond. I now hope his return restores the health of Mrs. Marshall and that he finds all the rest of his family and connections well.

*Lear:* He must have arrived tired from the celebrations. In the evening with the sound of bells, amidst an escort of militia on horseback and on foot and a crowd of people, General Marshall arrived in Philadelphia. The Gazette of the United States reported, "The occasion cannot be mentioned on which so prompt and general a muster of the cavalry ever before took place."

## ***THE SUNSET OF GEORGE WASHINGTON***

*Patsy:* But having heard that Mrs. Marshall was in Winchester, he immediately set out for that place. It is said that when he was getting on the public stage, Mr. Marshall, Ambassador extraordinary who had been greeted everywhere with show and pomp, was now leaving with bag in hand. Seeing that every seat was occupied, he sat quietly on the seat next to the coachman!

*GW:* John, John, John. And yet, I received a report that Marshall's arrival and reception in Richmond may really be called a complete triumph. The week was a kind of Jubilee. But upon the passage of time, he shall come. In the meantime, let us prepare for his arrival.

*Patsy:* Dear husband, you must rest and take some medicine.

*GW:* Ah, Patsy, having, through life, been blessed with a competent share of it, without using preventatives against sickness and as little medicine as possible when sick, I shall not now change my practice. Against the effect of time and age, no remedy has ever yet been discovered. Like the rest of my fellow mortals, I must submit and be reconciled to a gradual decline. *Exit GW with Patsy and Lear*

### **Scene 3**

*The City of Philadelphia. Enter Hercules*

*Hercules:* I am Hercules. I believe that I have always been a free man. Of late, I served as the chief cook for George Washington. Trained in the mysteries of my profession from early youth in the balmy days of Virginia, when her thousand chimneys smoked to indicate the generous hospitality that reigned throughout the whole length and breadth of her wide domain, I was, at the period

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of the first presidency, as highly accomplished a proficient in the culinary arts as could be found in the United States.

*Enter Patsy*

*Patsy:* He is a dark-brown man, little, if any above the usual size.

*Hercules:* I am possessed of such great muscular power as to entitle me to be compared with my namesake of fabulous history. I gloried in the cleanliness and nicety of my kitchen. Under my iron discipline, woe to my underlings if speck or spot could be discovered on the tables or dressers, or if the utensils did not shine like polished silver. With the luckless underlings who had offended, there was no abatement of punishment, for judgment and execution went hand in hand. The steward, and indeed the whole household, treated me with such respect, as well for my valuable services, for my general good character and for my pleasing manners. It was while preparing banquets, that I shone in all my splendor. During my labors, I required some half dozen aprons, and napkins out of number.

*Patsy:* It was surprising the order and discipline that was observed in so bustling a scene.

*Hercules:* My underlings flew in all directions to execute my orders, while I, the great master-spirit, possessed the power of ubiquity, to be everywhere at the same moment. When the steward in snow-white apron, silk shorts and stockings, and hair in full powder, placed the first dish on the table, the clock being on the stroke of four, “the labors of Hercules” ceased.

*Patsy:* While the masters of the republic were engaged in great discussions, the chief cook retired to make his toilet for an evening promenade. His remunerations from the slops of the kitchen were from one to two hundred

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dollars a year. Though homely in person, he lavished the most of these large avails upon dress. His linen was of unexceptional whiteness and quality, then black silk shorts, ditto waistcoat, ditto stockings, shoes highly polished, with large buckles covering a considerable part of the foot, blue cloth with velvet collar and bright metal buttons, a long watch-chain dangling, a cocked-hat and gold-headed cane completed the grand costume of the celebrated dandy of the President's kitchen.

*Hercules:* Thus arrayed, I invariably passed out at the front door, the porter making a low bow, which was promptly returned. I proceeded up Market street, attracting considerable attention, that street being the resort where fashionables did most congregate. Many were not a little surprised to behold so extraordinary a personage, while others who knew me would make a formal and respectful bow, that they might receive in return the salute of one of the most polished gentlemen of many years.

*Patsy:* He was the greatest dandy of that decade in Philadelphia. Yet, he lied when he proclaimed his fidelity and attachment to us.

*Hercules:* When I protested the suspicion my fidelity or attachment to the General, I spoke the truth. Over time, during my strolls, I marveled at one aspect of my fellow fashionables and even some of the dandies. They were freemen. They would remain in Philadelphia. Upon the retirement of the President, I would be removed to Mount Vernon, never to return to Market Street to congregate. I resolved to act.

*Patsy:* We were still in Philadelphia on the early morning of General Washington's 65<sup>th</sup> birthday. Yet, our tradition was to have a holiday on that day, even in our absence. The scoundrel took advantage of our generosity and absconded.

*Exit Patsy*

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*Hercules:* No longer in Philadelphia, I could not lavish the most of these large avails upon dress. I employed my prerequisites to purchase a horse; for it would have been a wrongful crime to secure one of the General's. The Mount Vernon plantation was well known to me. I made my way to Alexandria City. From there, I traversed the Potomac River and all of Maryland to arrive here in Philadelphia, a fearful journey. If captured, I would have been returned and received the punishment of common labor in Washington's fields. Yet, with my horse and fine chief cook dress and my muscular presentation, no one would bother with me. I have always been a free man and am now no longer a slave under the law. Why must I feel less free now than before? *Exit Hercules*

### **Scene 4**

*Mount Vernon. Enter GW, Patsy, Lear and John, carrying a saddlebag*

*GW:* Most welcome, General Marshall!

*Lear, reaching for the saddlebag:* Please General, allow me. *As Lear grabs the saddlebag, a bottle of whiskey falls on the ground, along with some common garb*

*GW:* John Marshall, have you taken to whiskey? I would have expected your beloved Madeira.

*John:* Certainly not, but I beg your forgiveness!

*GW:* Why, those are the clothes of a wagoner. Have you exchanged your lawbooks for a wagoner's packsaddle?

*John:* It appears that I have. I...I...

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*GW, laughing:* Look at those old clothes! They are below your usual dress, which is always terrible! You have mistakenly exchanged saddlebags with a wagoner! Imagine the dismay of the wagoner when he discovered this oversight of this man of the law!

*John:* I must confess this is not the first time of such an error.

*GW:* How so?

*John:* I shall tell you a tale, but please do not think I boast. Once a farmer traveled to Richmond because he was a party to a lawsuit to be tried there. He had one hundred dollars to pay for a lawyer, a very large fee. He inquired of the owner of the hotel where he was staying, “Who is the best lawyer in Richmond?”

*Patsy:* Methinks that would be John Marshall.

*John:* The host so responded, but when the farmer passed me, he could not believe that I was the man he needed, because I looked like a beggar! A little after, he encountered an older lawyer. This man looked like an experienced, good lawyer, with powdered wig and all. Of course, the farmer retained him. Upon so doing he followed his lawyer into the courtroom to view him argue another case before his own case could be heard. Much to his surprise, his lawyer’s opponent in the case was myself; and, much to his chagrin, I, uh...

*GW:* I heard that you completely devastated the case of the farmer’s own lawyer.

*John:* The farmer then approached me and apologized. I asked why a man that I did not know should apologize. The farmer then told me the whole story, concluding that he had only have five dollars left in his pocket. I then offered to take the man’s case and noted that his fee to take the case would be five dollars. I could not



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help but jest that I might not overcome "...the omnipotence of a powdered wig and a black coat."

*Patsy:* Of course, you won your case.

*John:* Yes, but when we parted, I told the farmer that if I had observed a lawyer dressed the way I was, I would not have hired him either!

*GW, laughing:* And now, this man, with the clothes of either a wagoner or a beggar has been feted as a hero in the cities of Philadelphia and Richmond.

*John:* I think I am not held in that high of a regard, Your Excellency. Yet, when I returned from France, even Mr. Jefferson attempted to have a pleasant meeting with me. He wrote to me... *Enter TJ*

*TJ:* Thomas Jefferson presents his compliments to General Marshall. I had the honor of calling at your lodgings twice this morning but was so un-lucky as to find that you were out on both occasions. I wished to have expressed in person my regret that a pre-engagement for today which could not be dispensed with would prevent me the satisfaction of dining in company with General Marshall, and therefore begs leave to place here the expressions of that respect which in common with my fellow citizens I bear you.

*John:* I wrote to him, "J Marshall begs leave to accompany his respectful compliments, to Mr. Jefferson with assurances of the regret he feels at being absent when Mr. Jefferson did him the honor to call on him. J Marshall is extremely sensible to the obliging expressions contained in Mr. Jefferson's polite letter of yesterday. He sets out tomorrow for Winchester and would, with pleasure, charge himself with any commands from Mr. Jefferson to that part of Virginia."

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*TJ:* In truth, I had committed an error in the original draft. Before making a correction, I had written that I "...was so lucky as to find that he was out on both occasions!" Seeing my error, I inserted the "un" before lucky. *Exit TJ*

*John:* Yes, Mr. Jefferson inserted the "un" before lucky. When he omitted the negative prefix, for once, Mr. Jefferson came very near to writing me the truth!

*Patsy:* Mr. Jefferson is the only gentleman in America who does not admire you!

*GW, laughing:* One would think Mr. Jefferson would so admire a man who could be mistaken for a wagoner or a beggar!

*Patsy:* Yes, after all, "all men are created equal!"

*John:* I must confess that I rejoice that I have not been mistaken in the opinion I have formed of my countrymen. I rejoice to find that they know how to estimate and, therefore, seek to avoid the horrors and dangers of war. Yet they also know how to value the blessings of liberty and national independence. Peace would be purchased at too high a price by bending beneath a foreign yoke. But now, I have returned to Richmond with a full determination to devote myself entirely to my professional duties. I am quite delighted to find that my prospects at the bar have sustained no material injury from my absence.

*Patsy:* I have heard that your friends have welcomed your return with the most flattering reception.

*GW:* I have heard that your friends have pressed you to become a candidate for Congress.

*John:* Indeed, I was very strongly pressed by the Federalists to become a candidate for Congress, and the gentleman of that party who had offered himself to the

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district, proposed to resign his pretensions in my favor. I have however positively refused to accede to the proposition and believe that I cannot be induced to change my determination. My refusal is peremptory, and I do not believe it possible that my determination can be shaken.

*GW:* You are, however, mistaken, sir.

*John:* I am, however, mistaken?

*Patsy:* I must attend to our supper.

*Lear:* I must attend to a letter. *Exit Patsy and Lear*

*GW:* It is from the ardent desire I must tell you...The Crisis is important! The temper of the people of this State in many places are so violent and outrageous that I wish to converse with you on the elections which must soon come on. Real independence depends greatly on our resisting the encroachments of France.

*John:* Have I not done so, your Excellency?

*GW:* There are crises in national affairs which make it the duty of a citizen to forego his private for the public interest. We are now in one of them! I cannot urge it enough. It is my decided conviction that every man who could contribute to the success of sound opinions is required by the most sacred duty to offer his service to the public. My strong conviction is that the best interests of our country depend on the character of the ensuing Congress. You must come into the Congress!

*John:* With all due respect, your Excellency, I have a very natural distrust in my ability to do any good.

*GW:* No one knows better than you do of the importance of the crisis with France.

*John:* But I have given assurances to another gentleman who is a candidate, which I cannot honorably violate.

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*GW:* I think that the gentleman would still willingly withdraw in your favor.

*John:* But I have made great commitments which require close attention to my profession. It would distress me should the emoluments from those cases be abandoned.

*GW:* Your becoming a member of Congress, for the present, would not sacrifice your practice as a lawyer. At any rate, the sacrifice might be only temporary. I ask your attention to my situation. I retired from the Executive department with the firmest determination never again to appear in a public capacity. I had withdrawn from office with a declaration of my determination, never again, under any circumstances, to enter public life. I had communicated this determination to the public, and my motives for adhering to it were too strong not to be well understood. No man could be more sincere in making that declaration, nor could any man feel stronger motives for adhering to it. No man could make a stronger sacrifice than I did in breaking a resolution thus publicly made, and which I had believed to be unalterable. Yet, you see me pledged to appear once more at the head of the American army.

*John, pausing and sighing:* Ah, my resolution yields to your representation. The obligation which had controlled your course is essentially different from that which binds me. No other man could fill the place to which your country has called you. Yet I see you, in opposition to your public declaration, in opposition to your private feelings, consenting, under a sense of duty, to surrender the sweets of retirement, and again to enter the most arduous and perilous station which an individual could fill. Although my services could weigh but little in the political balance, I consent to become a candidate.

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*GW, shaking John's hand:* Well done, General Marshall! Well done! Let us go into our supper. We shall toast your candidacy with a bottle of my finest Madeira.

*Exit GW and John*

### **Scene 5**

*The Commonwealth of Virginia. Enter TJ and Jemmy*

*Jemmy:* Marshall stands for Henrico district Representative.

*TJ:* But his election is doubtful. *Enter Patsy and Lear*

*Lear:* General Washington's nephew Bushrod writes, "I am happy to inform you that General Marshall has declared himself for Congress."

*Patsy, taking the letter:* We have no reason to fear for his success! *Enter John*

*John:* Every citizen has a right to know the political sentiments of a candidate. The whole of my policies respecting foreign nations are reducible to this single position: Commercial intercourse with all, but political ties with none. Buy as cheap and sell as dear as possible and never connect ourselves politically with any nation whatever!

*Jemmy:* The Alien and Sedition Bills are viewed by a great many well-meaning men as unwarranted by the Constitution.

*John:* Yet, I am not an advocate of the Alien and Sedition Bills! Among those principles deemed sacred in America...there is no one more deeply impressed on the public mind than the liberty of the press. That this liberty

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is often carried to excess, that it has sometimes degenerated into licentiousness, is seen and lamented, but the remedy has not been discovered. I am suffering a punishment for some unknown sins.

*TJ:* For these Federalist views, he must be rebuked.

*Lear:* General Marshall is now attacked by Federalists, as well.

*Patsy:* Mrs. Abigail Adams has written, “Mr. Marshall has sunk his character very much with all his real friends by his answers to certain questions proposed to him. I was astonished that a man of his knowledge should condemn the Alien and Sedition Bill!”

*John:* The whole malignancy of anti-federalism has become too active and considers itself as peculiarly interested in the reelection of my opponent. The presses, which circulate within the State, teem with publications of which the object is to poison still further the public opinion, particularly at me! *Enter GW*

*GW:* Colonel Lear, the last teeth sent to me function exceedingly well. I shall send the first to be altered and made like them. The great error in those is that the upper teeth and bars do not fall back enough thus but stand more upright. By this means the bar shoots beyond the gums and not only forces the lip out just under the nose, but by not having its proper place to rest upon frets which makes that part very sore. I am willing and ready to pay whatever they may charge me. General Marshall!

*John:* Your Excellency?

*GW:* I wish success to your election most sincerely.

*John:* I am by no means certain who will be elected for this district. Whatever the issue of the election may be, I shall neither reproach myself nor those at whose instance I have become a candidate, for the step I have taken.

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*GW:* If it should fail, of which I hope there is not the least danger, I shall not easily forgive myself for being urgent with you to take a stand for election.

*John:* I feel with increased force the obligation of duty to make sacrifices and exertions for the preservation of American union and independence. I am more convinced of the reality of the danger which threatens them. The exertions made against me throughout this State and even from other States have a great strength. If I fail, I shall regret the failure more on account of the defeat of our principles than of me. *Enter PH*

*PH:* Our Commonwealth has quit the sphere in which she has been placed by the Constitution. In daring to pronounce against the validity of federal laws, Virginia has gone out of her jurisdiction in a manner not warranted by any authority and in the highest degree alarming to every considerate man! Such opposition, on the part of Virginia to the acts of the general government, must beget their enforcement by military power. This would probably produce civil war!

*TJ:* On the question of adopting the new Constitution, to this Patrick Henry was most violently opposed, as is well known. After its adoption, he continued hostile to it, expressing, more than any other man in the US his thorough contempt and hatred of General Washington. He must oppose Marshall.

*PH:* General Marshall has exhibited the American character as respectable. Can it be thought that with these sentiments I should utter anything tending to prejudice General Marshall's election? Very far from it indeed. Independently of the high gratification I felt from his public ministry, he ever stood high in my esteem as a private citizen. His temper and disposition were always pleasant, his talents and integrity unquestioned. These things are

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enough to place that gentleman far above any competitor in the district for Congress. But when you add the unique information and insight which he has gained, and is able to communicate to our public councils, it is astonishing! Tell Marshall, I love him!

*TJ:* From being the most violent of all anti-federalists however, Mr. Henry has been brought over to the new Constitution by his speculation. Hamilton's funding system came most opportunely to his relief and Hamilton has become now his idol. Abandoning the republican advocates of the constitution, the federal government, on federal principles, has become his political creed. General Washington flattered him.

*Jemmy:* The opinion still prevails that Marshall will be disappointed, but it is agreed that the maximum of effort will be used in his favor.

*TJ:* You know what a wicked use has been made of the French negotiation, and particularly of the XYZ dish cooked up by Marshall!

*GW:* Governor Henry!

*PH:* General Washington!

*GW:* I ought to make an apology for what I am about to say, but if you will give me credit for my motives, I will contend for no more, however erroneous my sentiments may appear to you.

*PH:* Most highly do I thank and honor you for your unremitting care of the public welfare. Think not, Sir, that I mean to flatter when I say that how rarely has it happened to be the lot of one man to save his country twice!

*GW:* Then, it would be a waste of time, to attempt to bring to the view of a person of your observation and discernment, the endeavors of a certain party among us to disquiet the public mind with unfounded alarms, to arraign



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every act of the Administration and to set the people at variance with their Government.

*Patsy:* Methinks he refers to one Thomas Jefferson.

*PH:* Candor obliges me to acknowledge that I was amongst the number of blind and deluded. And I must thank Heaven, that our Government was guided by a clearer intellect and foresight than mine, you, sir. Events have proved that the ignorance has spread far and wide.

*GW:* Unfortunately, and extremely do I regret it, the State of Virginia has taken the lead in this opposition.

*PH:* They have sapped the foundations of our morality and religion, preparing the minds of men to equal hostility against their own government.

*GW:* Well then, let that party set up a broomstick, and call it a true son of Liberty, a Democrat, or give it any other epithet that will suit their purpose, and it will command their votes in toto! And so far as I understand those who nickname themselves “Democrats,” they are at variance with those truths which concern our happiness in the world to come, alike with our happiness in this.

*PH:* Will not the Federalists meet, or rather defend their cause, on the opposite ground?

*GW:* One of the reasons provided is that the most respectable, and best qualified characters among us, will not come forward. Easy and happy in their circumstances at home, and believing themselves secure in their liberties and property, will not forsake them, or their occupations, and engage in the turmoil of public business; or expose themselves to the calumnies of their opponents, whose weapons are detraction. Surely, they must, or they will discover a want of Policy, indicative of weakness and pregnant of mischief, which cannot be admitted.

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*PH:* Yes, my dear sir, I accord with every sentiment you express to me.

*GW:* But at such a crisis as this, when everything dear and valuable to us is assailed, when measures are systematically pursued, which must eventually dissolve the union, I say, when these things have become so obvious, ought characters who are best able to rescue their country from the pending evil to remain at home? Rather, ought they not to come forward and, by their talents and influence, stand in the breach?

*PH:* Aye and General Marshall has come forward and I have stood with him.

*GW:* That is good. I come now, my good Sir, to my object—which is to express a hope, and an earnest wish, that you would come forward at the ensuing elections as a candidate for representation, in the General Assembly of this Commonwealth.

*PH:* I am ashamed to refuse the little boon you ask of me, when your example is before my eyes.

*GW:* In a word, I conceive it to be of immense importance at this crisis that you should be there.

*PH:* Your excellency, my children would blush to know, that you and their father were contemporaries, and that when you asked him to throw in his mite for the public happiness, he refused to do it. In conformity with these feelings, I will declare myself a candidate.

*Jemmy:* Mr. Jefferson, many are writing to me fathoming Mr. Henry's motives. He has openly declared that Mr. Marshall, your enemy, is the second man in the union he would vote for and written it into the district to aid his election.

*TJ:* Virginia is the hope of republicans throughout the union, and that if Mr. Henry prevails in removing her

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resistance to monarchical measures, the whole body will be dispirited, and fall a sudden and easy prey to the enemies of liberty. He is now espousing measures he once so lamentably deprecated and foretold in the Virginia Constitutional convention.

*Jemmy:* His apostasy is considered as a personal enmity to the both of us, to gratify which he has sacrificed his principles to a party, determined on your destruction.

*TJ:* If you will not save yourself or myself, save your country. For goodness sake, take up your pen!

*John:* The fate of my election is extremely uncertain. The means used to defeat it are despicable in the extreme and yet they succeed. Nothing I believe more debases or pollutes the human mind than factions.

*TJ:* The moment too is favorable as the tide is evidently turning and the public mind awaking from Marshall's XYZ romance.

*Patsy:* At one gathering for him, Marshall threw fireworks into the bonfires and danced around them with his constituents.

*Lear:* On the day of the election, sick men were taken in their beds to the polls. The lame and the blind were hunted up and every mode of conveyance was mustered into service.

*Jemmy:* Liquor in abundance added fuel to the flame. Fights became common.

*Lear:* Men were shaking fists at each other, rolling up their sleeves, cursing and swearing.

*Patsy:* When one gentleman voted for Marshall, another hollered, "You, sir, ought to have your mouth smashed!"

*GW:* Colonel Lear, what news from Richmond?

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*Lear:* Knowing the anxiety of your mind on General Marshall's election, I can communicate to you the satisfactory intelligence of his having been elected by a majority.

*John:* Your Excellency, my election was contested with unusual warmth, but I succeeded.

*GW:* With infinite pleasure, I received the news of your election! Let us be content.

*John:* You taught me that a politician, even in times of violent party spirit, maintains his respectability by showing his strength; and is most safe when he encounters prejudice most fearlessly.

*GW:* As the tide is turning, I hope it will come in with a full flow.

*TJ:* The congressional elections are extremely to be regretted. The apostasy of Mr. Henry must be unaccountable to those who do not know all the recesses of his heart. Mr. Henry has taken the field openly for our legislature, but it is filled with too great a mass of talents and principle to be now swayed by him. He will experience mortifications to which he has been hitherto a stranger. Still I fear something from his intriguing and cajoling talents, for which he is still more remarkable than for his eloquence. As to the effect of his name among the people, I have found it crumble like a dried leaf, the moment they become satisfied of his apostacy.

*Jemmy:* Although there be cause for serious apprehension, I trust the friends of order, justice and truth will once more experience the favor of that God who has so often and so signally bestowed his Blessings upon our Country.

*TJ:* Jemmy, I said once that while Mr. Henry lives, another bad constitution would be formed, and saddled

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forever on us. What we must do, I think, is devoutly to pray for his death.

*Jemmy:* Fear nothing. Patrick Henry is gone.

*Exit PH*

*John:* Your Excellency, Virginia has sustained a very serious loss, which all good men will long lament, in the death of Patrick Henry.

*GW:* In the death of Mr. Henry, not only Virginia, but our country at large has sustained a very serious loss. I sincerely lament his death as a friend. Oh, John, the loss of his eminent talents as a patriot I consider as peculiarly unfortunate at this critical juncture of our affairs. *Exit GW, Patsy, Lear and John*

*TJ:* General Washington flattered him. Mr. Henry's apostasy sunk him to nothing in the estimation of his country. He lost at once all that influence which federalism had hoped, by cajoling him, to transfer with him to itself, and a man who, through a long and active life, had been the idol of his country, beyond anyone that ever lived, descended to the grave with less than its indifference, and verified the saying of the philosopher, that no man must be called happy till he is dead.

*Jemmy:* And General Washington himself?

*TJ:* General Washington has lived too short a time after and too much withdrawn from his administration to correct the views into which he has been deluded.

*Jemmy:* Have you communicated these sentiments to him?

*TJ:* It happens to be not convenient to call on him. I have never had another opportunity. As to the cessation of correspondence observed during this short interval, no reason occurred for communication. Both of us are too

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much oppressed with letter-writing to trouble the other,  
with a letter about nothing!

*Jemmy:* No letters?

*TJ:* I do affirm that there has never passed a word, written or verbal, directly or indirectly, between General Washington and myself on that Mazzei letter. He would never had degraded himself so far as to take to himself the imputation in that letter on the “Samsons in combat.” The whole story is a fabrication, and I defy the framers of it, and all mankind to produce a scrip of a pen between General Washington and myself on the subject! Let us talk no more of this, Mr. Madison! *Exit TJ*

*Jemmy, sighing:* It may, on the whole, be truly said of Mr. Jefferson, that he is greatly eminent for the comprehensiveness and fertility of his genius, as well as the vast extent and rich variety of his acquirements; and particularly distinguished by the philosophic impress left on every subject which he touches. Nor is he less distinguished for an early and uniform devotion to the cause of liberty, and for a systematic preference of a form of government squared in the strictest degree, to the equal rights of man. In the social and domestic spheres, he is a model of the virtues and manners which most adorn them. Yet, I am afraid that death may soon rob our country of its most distinguished ornament, and the world of one of its greatest benefactors, George Washington, the hero of liberty, the father of his country and the friend of man.

*Exit Jemmy*

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## **Scene 6**

*Mount Vernon. Enter GW, Patsy and Lear*

*GW:* Colonel Lear, do you have the two letters that I requested?

*Lear, handing GW a letter:* Yes.

*GW, putting the letter in his jacket:* Thank you. I shall put this one aside. Let us try again. Colonel Lear, I have written to my nephew as follows, “The body servant of Mrs. Washington absconded without the least provocation and without our having suspicion of her intention. At length, we learnt she got to Portsmouth in New Hampshire. At first, she appeared willing to return. If you could by any proper means, be capable of recovering and forwarding Oney Judge to this place, it would be a pleasing circumstance to me. I do not, however, wish you to undertake anything that may involve unpleasant or troublesome means. If she puts me to no unnecessary trouble and expense and conducts herself well, she will escape punishment for the escape and be treated according to her merits. To promise more, would be an impolitic and dangerous precedent.” Have you heard from him?

*Lear:* Your Excellency, your nephew writes that she has stated...

*Enter Oney*

*Oney:* I am free now and choose to remain so.

*Lear:* Your orders to bring her and her infant child by force resulted in New Hampshire officials abetting her escape from the town.

*Oney:* They will never trouble me anymore.

*Lear:* When asked if she is not sorry that she left the Washington family, as she has labored so much harder since, than before, her reply is...

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*Oney:* No, I am free, and have, I trust, been made a child of God by the means. I am Oney Judge. I am a free woman!  
*Exit Oney*

*GW:* After I am gone, trouble her no more. I wish from my soul that the legislature of this State could see the policy of a gradual abolition of slavery!

*Patsy:* No! We require them!

*GW:* Yet, Patsy, negro slaves must be clothed and fed...whether they make anything or not. Would it not be better to hire them?

*Patsy:* No, for they are limited in their capabilities.

*GW:* When I was President, I was visited by one of the people called Quakers. They were active in promoting the measures before Congress to emancipate the Slaves. After some general conversation, he employed arguments to show the immorality and injustice of keeping these people in a state of slavery. However, he did not wish for more than a gradual abolition, or to see any infraction of the Constitution to effect it. To these I replied, that as it was a matter which might come before me for official decision, I was not inclined to express any sentiments on the merits of the question before this should happen. The proposal of the Quakers was put to sleep and will scarcely awake before the year 1808. Yet, the Quakers troubled my dear friend Patrick Henry.  
*Enter PH*

*Lear:* I have often heard it said that Patrick Henry was "the completest speaker ever heard."

*GW:* I can give you no idea of the music of his voice, or the natural elegance of his style or manner. Yet, he was superb. When he opposed the Stamp Act,

*PH:* If this be treason, make the most of it!



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*GW:* When he spoke at a Virginia Convention, which convened at St. John's Episcopal Church in the town of Richmond, he evinced such an unusual force of argument, and such novel and impassioned eloquence as soon electrified the whole house.

*PH:* Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!

*GW:* He spoke often of liberty.

*PH:* Liberty, the greatest of all earthly blessings; Give us that precious jewel, and you may take everything else!

*GW:* He defended our trials by jury.

*PH:* Why do we love this trial by jury? Because it prevents the hand of oppression from cutting you off.

*GW:* Even in opposing our Constitution, he supported others.

*PH:* What do we require? Not preeminence, but safety—that our citizens may be able to sit down in peace and security under their own fig-trees.

*GW:* And when he and his comrades lost, he graciously accepted defeat.

*PH:* I look on that paper as the most fatal plan that could possibly be conceived to enslave a free people. I fought it with all that I had with me in the proper place. But the Constitution has been ratified and, as true and faithful men, I implore you, “go home!”

*Lear:* And the Quakers troubled him?

*GW:* On Emancipation.

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*PH:* Believe me, I shall honor the Quakers for their noble effort to abolish slavery. It is calculated to promote moral and political good. Is it not amazing, that at a time, when the rights of humanity are defined and understood with precision, in a country above all others fond of liberty, that in such an age, and such a country we find men, professing a religion the most humane, mild, meek, gentle and generous; adopting a principle as repugnant to humanity as it is inconsistent with the Bible and destructive to liberty? Every thinking honest man rejects it!

*Patsy:* He held his slaves throughout his life and in death.

*PH:* Would anyone believe that I am master of slaves of my own purchase! I am drawn along by the general inconvenience of living without them. I will not, I cannot justify it. However culpable my conduct, I believe a time will come when an opposition will be offered to abolish this lamentable evil. Let us transmit to our descendants, together with our slaves, a pity for their unhappy lot and an abhorrence for slavery. If we cannot end evil, let us treat the unhappy victims with lenity. It is the furthest advance we can make toward justice. We owe to the purity of our religion to show that it is at variance with that law which warrants slavery.

*Patsy:* Yet, Mr. Henry has died and has deeded his slaves. *Exit PH*

*GW:* So, he has. Yet, he haunts me, as do others who have gone before. Patsy, do you remember Phillis Wheatley?

*Patsy:* Wheatley? *Enter Phillis Wheatley*

*GW:* She has long since passed away. During the first year of the war, she wrote to me.

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*Phillis:* I have taken the freedom to address your Excellency in the enclosed poem, and entreat your acceptance, though I am not insensible of its inaccuracies. Your being appointed by the Continental Congress to be General of the armies of North America, together with the fame of your virtues, excite sensations not easy to suppress. Your generosity, therefore, I presume, will pardon the attempt. Wishing your Excellency all possible success in the great cause you are so generously engaged in, I am Your Excellency's most obedient humble servant, Phillis Wheatley.

*GW:* In searching over a parcel of papers one day, I brought it to light again. At first, with a view of doing justice to her great poetical genius, I had a great mind to publish the Poem, but not knowing whether it might not be considered rather as a mark of my own vanity than as a compliment to her I laid it aside till I came across it again.

*Phillis:* Celestial choir! enthroned in realms of light  
Columbia's scenes of glorious toils I write.  
While freedom's cause her anxious breast alarms,  
She flashes dreadful in refulgent arms.  
See mother earth her offspring's fate bemoan,  
And nations gaze at scenes before unknown!  
See the bright beams of Heaven's revolving light  
Involved in sorrows and the veil of night!  
The goddess comes, she moves divinely fair,  
Olive and laurel binds her golden hair:  
Wherever shines this native of the skies,  
Unnumbered charms and recent graces rise.  
Muse! bow propitious while my pen relates  
How pour her armies through a thousand gates:  
As when Eolus Heaven's fair face deforms,  
Enwrapped in tempest and a night of storms;  
Astonished ocean feels the wild uproar,  
The refluent surges beat the sounding shore;

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Or thick as leaves in Autumn's golden reign,  
Such, and so many, moves the warrior's train.  
In bright array they seek the work of war,  
Where high unfurled the ensign waves in air.  
Shall I to Washington their praise recite?  
Enough thou knowest them in the fields of fight.  
Thee, first in place and honors, we demand  
The grace and glory of thy martial band.  
Famed for thy valor, for thy virtues more,  
Hear every tongue thy guardian aid implore!  
One century scarce performed its destined round,  
When Gallic powers Columbia's fury found;  
And so may you, whoever dares disgrace  
The land of freedom's Heaven-defended race!  
Fixed are the eyes of nations on the scales,  
For in their hopes Columbia's arm prevails.  
Anon Britannia droops the pensive head,  
While round increase the rising hills of dead.  
Ah! cruel blindness to Columbia's state!  
Lament thy thirst of boundless power too late.  
Proceed, great chief, with virtue on thy side,  
Thy every action let the goddess guide.  
A crown, a mansion and a throne that shine,  
With gold unfading, Washington! be thine.

*GW:* I thanked her most sincerely for her polite notice of me, in her elegant lines. I did not deserve such praise. Yet, the style and manner exhibited a striking proof of her great poetical talents. In honor of which, and as a tribute justly due to her, I would have published the Poem, had I not been apprehensive, that, while I only meant to give the world this new proof of her genius, I might have incurred the imputation of vanity.

*Patsy:* She was but one with such talents.

*GW:* Alas, her talents are no more.

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*Phillis:* I am Phillis Wheatley. I am a free woman.  
*Exit Phillis*

*Lear:* Yet, there are others who are now free. Have you not read that one Primus Hall has created a school in Boston for the education of negro children? *Enter Primus Hall*

*GW:* Primus Hall? I remember him from the war in camp.

*Primus:* I am Primus Hall. I am a free man. During the war, his Excellency once said to me...

*GW:* Primus, I feel I need exercises.

*Primus:* Tomorrow, I will set up a sort of jump rope for you, fastening one end to a stake and holding the other end at my own chest.

*GW:* That is my preference, as well as to stay here overnight, provided you have a spare blanket and straw.

*Primus:* Oh, yes, plenty of straw and blankets-a-plenty. *Primus sets up straw and blankets for GW. GW lies down and goes to sleep. Primus sits down and nods off.*

*GW:* Primus! Primus!

*Primus:* What, General?

*GW:* Primus, what did you mean by saying that you had blankets and straw enough? Here you have given up your blanket and straw to me that I may sleep comfortably while you are obliged to sit through the night.

*Primus:* It's nothing, General. It is nothing. I am well enough. Don't trouble yourself about me, General, but go to sleep again. No matter about me. I sleep very well.

*GW:* But it does matter. It is matter. I cannot do it, Primus. If either is to sit up, I will. But I think there is no

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need for either one of us sitting up. The blanket is wide enough for two. Come and lie down here with me.

*Primus:* Oh, no, General! No; let me sit here. I'll do very well on the floor.

*GW:* I say, come and lie down here! There is room for both, and I insist upon it!

*Primus:* I was exceedingly shocked at the idea of lying under the same covering with His Excellency, but his tone was so resolute and determined that I could not hesitate. I prepared myself, therefore, and laid down on the same straw...

*GW:* And under the same blanket, Primus and I slept until the morning. Primus served our country in the war, and, in so doing, has set himself free and now, he is a teacher of others. *Exit Primus*

*Patsy:* You were always too kind. Sometimes, when we would pass Hercules on Market Street in Philadelphia, he would bow to you, and you would tip your hat to him, as if he were a freeman!

*GW:* Politeness is cheap, and I never allow anyone to be more polite to me than I to him. Ah, Hercules, Hercules. My dear Colonel, fetch me Delia.

*Lear:* Yes, your Excellency. *Exit Lear*

*Patsy:* Why do you call Delia? She must be deeply upset that she may never see her father again.

*GW:* Perhaps. *Re-enter Lear, with Delia Posey*

*Delia:* Your Excellency?

*GW:* Do not be afraid, Delia. Yet, I wish to hear the truth. Your father, Hercules has absconded from this place. Does this not sadden you?

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*Delia:* Oh, sir, please do not punish me for this truth. Yet, I am very glad, because he is free now.

*GW:* Well done, my girl. Well done. You are free to go. *Exit Delia*

*Patsy:* Well done? Once more, you always are too kind!

*GW:* Too kind? Phillis was a poet favored by the Muses! Primus is now an esteemed educator. Oney is a seamstress of great talent! Hercules a celebrated chef! Should not their kin rejoice in their freedom? Should I not tip my hat to them and share my blanket with them? I know what I must do now. Write this down, Colonel Lear. In the name of God, amen, I George Washington of Mount Vernon, a citizen of the United States, and lately President of the same, do make, ordain and declare this instrument; which is written with my own hand and every page thereof subscribed with my name, to be my last Will and Testament, revoking all others... To my dearly beloved wife Martha Washington, I give and bequeath the use, profit and benefit of my whole Estate, real and personal, for the term of her natural life... Upon the decease of my wife, it is my Will and desire that all the Slaves, which I hold in my own right, shall receive their freedom.

*Patsy:* How can...

*GW:* Listen Patsy. To emancipate them during your life, though earnestly wished by me, would be accompanied by great difficulties for you. They shall continue to be in your possession during your natural life. It is not in my power, under the rules by which your slaves are held, to free them. So, you shall possess both sets of slaves for your life. But mine shall eventually be free. And among those of mine who will receive freedom, there may be some, who from old age or bodily infirmities, and others who on account of their infancy, that will be unable to

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support themselves. It is my Will and desire that all of these shall be comfortably clothed and fed by my heirs while they live. The children thus bound are to be taught to read and write; and to be brought up to some useful occupation.

*Patsy:* No!

*GW:* I do hereby expressly forbid the sale or transportation out of the said Commonwealth, of any Slave I may die possessed of, under any pretense whatsoever. And I do, moreover, most pointedly and most solemnly enjoin it upon my Executors to see that this clause respecting Slaves, and every part thereof, be religiously fulfilled, without evasion, neglect or delay!

*Patsy:* How can...

*GW:* Patsy, I constitute and appoint my dearly beloved wife Martha Washington Executrix and others the Executors of my Will and testament.

*Lear:* I have taken the notes as you have stated.

*Lear:* Your Excellency, does your manumission apply to Hercules?

*GW:* Ah, my Old Cook Hercules!

*Patsy:* Colonel Lear, I have been so fortunate as to engage a white cook who answers very well. I have thought about it therefore better to decline taking Hercules back.

*GW:* You have your answer, Colonel Lear. Hercules freed himself, but he always had the spirit of a free man. I cannot free him, but I can ratify the obvious.

*Patsy, sighing:* As I must do with Oney.



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*GW:* Colonel Lear, the construction of my testament will readily be perceived that no professional character has been consulted or has had any agency in its draft. My words may, notwithstanding, appear crude and incorrect to many and indeed to you, Patsy. It will occupy many of my leisure hours to write. But I will endeavor to be plain and explicit. I hope and trust, that no disputes will arise concerning my intents and purposes. They shall be as binding on the parties as if it had been given in the Supreme Court of the United States.

*Patsy:* To which your nephew Bushrod has been recently appointed by John Adams.

*GW:* Thank God! Mr. Jefferson may fulfill his desire to be President, but he shall be checked by John Marshall in Congress and Bushrod on the Court. Colonel Lear, it is my express desire that my corpse may be interred in a private manner, without parade or funeral oration.

*Lear:* I shall see to it, your Excellency. *Exit Lear*

*GW:* My dearest wife, I know the gap between us is wide on my desires.

*Patsy:* It is. It is. Yet, I am still determined to be cheerful and to be happy in whatever situation I may be, for I have also learnt from experience that the greater part of our happiness or misery depends upon our dispositions, and not upon our circumstances. We carry the seeds of the one, or the other about with us, in our minds, wherever we go.

*GW:* I do apologize.

*Patsy:* You need not. To that almighty power who alone can heal the wounds he inflicts I look for consolation and fortitude. I shall bow to your wishes.

*GW:* Thank you...thank you. *Enter*  
*Hercules, Oney, Phillis and Primus*

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*Hercules:* I am Hercules Posey. I am a free man.

*Oney:* I am Oney Judge. I am a free woman.

*Phillis:* I am Phillis Wheatley. I am a free woman.

*Primus:* I am Primus Hall. I am a free man.

*GW:* They are all free women and men. 'Tis well.

*Patsy:* Shall we go to our dinner? *Exit*

*Hercules, Oney, Phillis and Primus*

*GW, taking out the letter:* Patsy, do you remember my letter to you from Philadelphia at the beginning of the war?

*Patsy:* I do indeed.

*GW:* My Dearest, I am now set down to write to you on a subject which fills me with great concern—and this concern is greatly aggravated and increased when I reflect on the uneasiness that I know it will give you. It has been determined in Congress, that the whole Army raised for the defense of the American Cause shall be put under my care, and that it is necessary for me to proceed immediately to Boston to take upon me the command of it. You may believe me my dear Patsy, when I assure you, in the most solemn manner, that, so far from seeking this appointment I have used every endeavor in my power to avoid it...

*Patsy:* ...Not only from your unwillingness to part with me and the family...

*GW:* ...But from a consciousness of its being a trust too great for my capacity...

*Patsy:* ...and that you should enjoy more real happiness and felicity in one month with me at home...

*GW:* ...Than I have the most distant prospect of reaping abroad, if my stay was to be seven times seven

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years. But, as it has been a kind of destiny that has thrown me upon this service, I shall hope that my undertaking of it, is designed to answer some good purpose. You might, and I suppose did perceive, from the tenor of my letters, that I was apprehensive I could not avoid this appointment...

*Patsy:* ...As you did not even pretend to intimate when you should return...

*GW:* That was the case. It was utterly out of my power to refuse this appointment without exposing my character to such censures as would have reflected dishonor upon myself and given pain to my friends. This I am sure could not and ought not to be pleasing to you and must have lessened me considerably in my own esteem. I shall rely therefore, confidently, on that Providence which has heretofore preserved and been bountiful to me, not doubting but that I shall return safe to you in the fall. I shall feel no pain from the toil, or the danger of the campaign. My unhappiness will flow, from the uneasiness I know you will feel at being left alone. I therefore beg of you to summon your whole fortitude and resolution and pass your time as agreeably as possible. Nothing will give me so much sincere satisfaction as to hear this, and to hear it from your own pen...My earnest and ardent desire is that you would pursue any plan that is most likely to produce content and a tolerable degree of tranquility as it must add greatly to my uneasy feelings to hear that you are dissatisfied, and complaining at what I really could not avoid.

*Patsy:* I am fond of what comes from the heart. Yet, even then, your thoughts were on your Will and providing for me. Yet, dearest, your thoughts now dwell on death.

*GW:* As I wrote, life is always uncertain, common prudence dictates to every man the necessity of settling his

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temporal concerns whilst it is in his power and whilst the mind is calm and undisturbed.

*Patsy:* Is your mind calm and undisturbed?

*GW:* Aye. Patsy, I call to mind the days of my youth and find they have long since fled to return no more. I am now descending the hill...and though I was Blessed with a good constitution, I am of a short-lived family—and might soon expect to be entombed in the dreary mansions of my fathers. These things darken the shades and give a gloom to the picture..., but I will not repine. I have had my day, Patsy.

*Patsy:* Your best services, and most anxious wishes were always devoted to the welfare and happiness of your country. You must know that they were truly appreciated and afford considerable consolation.

*GW:* I do, I do; and when I shall be called upon to follow my short-lived family is known only to the giver of life. When the summons comes, I shall endeavor to obey it with a good grace.

*Patsy:* Then know that I am only fond of what comes from your heart.

*GW:* I do; and 'tis well. It is well.

**THE END**



## NOTES FROM THE AUTHOR

The Father of our country, George Washington always struck me as an aloof and distant figure from history. The other two Presidents usually counted in the group of the three greatest, Abraham Lincoln and Franklin Roosevelt are far more accessible. Lincoln and Roosevelt led us through two great wars and tragically died while serving in office. Both men were stoic; Lincoln through the death of his beloved son Willie and Roosevelt through his paralysis from polio. Both men showed great wit and humor, which have been passed down to us.

Washington was a man, who, in some sense, played a character named George Washington. He was always quite formal and there are few recorded instances where he showed humor. Some people viewed him as a great general, but also as a bit of a political dolt, manipulated by Alexander Hamilton. This view has two sources. First, Hamilton's opponents, particularly Thomas Jefferson, promulgated it to justify a political argument that Washington, though a great man, sided with Hamilton even though, in their view, he was really a Jeffersonian democrat. Second, Hamilton's widow, in promoting the memory of her husband, pushed the notion that Hamilton was often the genius behind Washington. Washington, in maintaining his silence at critical moments, perhaps aided the positions of Jefferson and Mrs. Hamilton.

Yet, we have at our disposal over 32,000 communications from Washington throughout his lifetime. Many of the man's thoughts and feelings are in plain sight if we choose to just simply read them. In my view, in the

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political area as well as the military one, George Washington was no dolt, but a brilliant thinker. It is my hope that this play will demonstrate this point in at least one stage of Washington's life – his final years.

George Washington passed away on December 14, 1799 at 67 years of age, the same age as this author. Thus, I chose to cover him at an age about which I know a little. The play covers the period roughly from his leaving the Presidency on March 4, 1797 to his death. Yet, the drama does not cover his passing. My strong desire is to have its audience part with a George Washington as the living, breathing vibrant human being that he was.

My belief is that the portrait on the cover portrays such a person approaching the dusk of his life. Charles Willson Peale (April 15, 1741 – February 22, 1827) painted seven portraits of George Washington. The one chosen is his last; painted in 1795, a little bit prior to the time of this drama. Most portraits show our first President as a stoic, unapproachable man. To me, this one shows a man of concern, a bit weighed down by problems; yet, able and willing to address those that may confront him, including foreign policy, Virginia politics, the disposition of his slaves and his painful dentures.

My hope also is that the play, like Peale's painting, will cover the man warts and all. His own words reveal that the man clearly viewed some human beings as his property to treat and dispose as he pleased. In this play, the words from his letters are used to show this. We have few words to present a picture of his thoughts evolving to free his slaves. My first two books, [The Saga of the Four Kings, Book One: The Age of Washington](#) and [An American Devotional: From the Voices of Our Founding](#)

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Mothers and Fathers employed the actual words of the Founders at the time that they said or wrote them. This play takes many more liberties. While their words are a starting point, phrases are edited for clarity and words may be provided at different times from when they were spoken or written. In some cases, some founders may repeat the words of another, such as Martha Washington repeating words from the letters of Abigail Adams.

Those who either read the play or are involved in its production will note that liberties are also taken within scenes. Many scenes include flashbacks to another time or even characters not physically at the location of the scene. Moreover, one scene may include events and dialogue from letters that really occurred over several months, or in a few cases, years. The drama takes this license to an extreme in the last two scenes.

Admirers of Thomas Jefferson will probably despise this play and note that some of his words were not spoken at the time. Indeed, he does speak words from a letter he wrote to Martin Van Buren many years after the play. But, most of his words in the drama are his own and the substance of his comments is provided here. He is given his due as the author of the Declaration of Independence. At the same time, it is the view of this author that his role in the Kentucky Resolutions did plant the seeds for the Civil War.

The major source for this play is a great book by Joseph Ellis, His Excellency: George Washington. I recommend it to all who wish to know Washington. The author also relied heavily on the online resource, Founders Online, Correspondence and Other Writings of Six Major Shapers of the United States: George Washington,

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A free sample of the first four chapters of *The Saga of the Four Kings: Book One, The Age of Washington* follows.

*THE SUNSET OF GEORGE WASHINGTON*

**Sample of The Saga of  
the Four Kings:**

**Book One, The Age of  
Washington**

# ***THE SUNSET OF GEORGE WASHINGTON***

## **Chapter 1: Silverheels**

“Useful, not ornamental. Good, not great.”

Silverheels had always drawn strength from his family, and those words from his mother would serve him well on that warm spring day. He had heard the church bell ringing, calling young men to muster for what would later become the American War for Independence. When the lad happened upon the muster field, he appeared to be a young giant running out of the forest. Some noticed his blue socks with the white heels that his mother had knitted for him. From this footwear he would gain the moniker Silverheels.<sup>i</sup>

A witness later described the scene: “It was in May 1775. He was then a youth of nineteen. The muster field was some twenty miles distant from the Court House, and in a section of country peopled by tillers of the earth. Rumors of the occurrences near Boston had circulated with the effect of alarm and agitation, but without the means of ascertaining the truth...The Captain had called the company together, and was expected to attend, but did not.”<sup>ii</sup>

The witness described Silverheels as he appeared on that day: “He was about six feet high, straight and rather

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slender, of dark complexion—showing little, if any, rosy red, yet good health, the outline of the face nearly a circle, and within that, eyes dark to blackness, strong and penetrating, beaming with intelligence and good nature; an upright forehead, rather low, was terminated in a horizontal line by a mass of raven-black hair of unusual thickness and strength. The features of the face were in harmony with this outline, and the temples fully developed. The result of this combination was interesting and very agreeable. The body and limbs indicated agility, rather than strength, in which, however, he was, by no means, deficient. He wore a purple or pale blue hunting-shirt, and trousers of the same material fringed with white. A round black hat, mounted with the bucks-tail for a cockade, crowned the figure and the man.”

As he came to a halt and caught his breath, the lad thought of how he had prepared for this assembly, as he later recalled: “About the time I entered my eighteenth year, the controversy between Great Britain and her colonies had assumed so serious an aspect as almost to monopolize the attention of the old and the young. I engaged in it with all the zeal and enthusiasm which belonged to my age; and devoted more time to learning the first rudiments of military exercise in an independent company of the gentlemen of the county, to training a

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militia company in the neighborhood, and to the political essays of the day.”<sup>iii</sup>

He had trained to be a lieutenant in the Fauquier Rifles of the Culpeper Minutemen battalion. Yet here, at the muster field, no captain was present. As he surveyed the men gathered, he wanted to scream out that it was not supposed to be this way! For a moment, he wished that his parents were present—to tell him what to do. He then remembered the constant admonition from his own beloved mother—be useful, not ornamental, and be good, not great.<sup>iv</sup> Silverheels stepped forward.

The witness remembered his words: “My fellow soldiers, no Captain will be here today. I have been appointed Lieutenant, instead of a better man. I have come to meet you as fellow soldiers, who are likely to be called on to defend your country and your own rights and liberties. The Americans have been victorious in New England, but more fighting is expected. Soldiers are called and it is time to brighten up our firearms and learn to use them in the field. If you would fall into a single line, I will show you the new exercise.”

The lieutenant then brought his own gun to his shoulder, and the sergeants put the men into a line. The

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witness recalled, “He went through the manual exercise by word and motion deliberately pronounced and performed, in the presence of the company, before he required the men to imitate him; and then proceeded to exercise them, with the most perfect temper. Never did man possess a temper more happy, or if otherwise, more subdued or better disciplined.” After the men had drilled, people at the scene marveled not only at the youth’s leadership but also at the fact that, after the drill, he and the men were playing games—running and jumping. They were throwing small rings!<sup>v</sup>

Many of life’s lessons are learned by failure, but on that day, Silverheels learned a lesson from a success. He had not tried to take charge by his status (ornamental) or by making a great speech. Rather, he had been useful and good, and as a result, men had followed his lead. The lad went off to war, happy that the admonition of his mother had served him well. Moreover, the stockings his mother had made for him had gained him a fun nickname.

The first contribution of the young lieutenant to the war was at the decisive American victory at the Battle of Great Bridge near Norfolk, Virginia.<sup>vi</sup> He later recalled in his autobiography, “We were ordered to march into the lower country for the purpose of defending it against a



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small regular and predatory force commanded by Lord Dunmore. I was engaged in the action at the Great Bridge; and was in Norfolk when it was set on fire by a detachment from the British ships lying in the river, and afterwards when the remaining houses were burnt by orders from the Committee of safety.”

In 1776 the status of the young man changed from militiaman to an officer in the army of George Washington. Silverheels remembered the days of his youth when the great general and his own father were friends, working together as surveyors. Sometimes the boy would be allowed to join them. Silverheels liked the fact that Washington always seemed to take an interest in him. He, in turn, was in awe of the general.

The lieutenant was happy to go wherever Washington sent him. The British had occupied the city of New York in the fall of 1776. In April of 1777, Silverheels’s regiment of sharpshooters was dispatched through New York into the Hudson Valley to establish a presence against the British north of the city.<sup>vii</sup> But by the fall of that year, he was back serving under Washington.

September proved to be a terrible month. Because the British were not able to successfully occupy New Jersey,

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they determined to sail troops south of New York City and up into the Chesapeake Bay to march through Delaware to seize Philadelphia. The lieutenant and his light infantry unit of six hundred marksmen were assigned to slow the British advance and so fought the Battle of Iron Hill.<sup>viii</sup> Having been designated the American flag on the previous June 14 by the Continental Congress, for the first time, the Stars and Stripes flew proudly in battle. Alas, the flag could not prevent defeat when half of the unit ran out of ammunition! They fought on valiantly with their swords and bayonets, but in the end, Silverheels and his unit had to retreat.

Then came the Battle of Brandywine Creek.<sup>ix</sup> The British had seventeen thousand troops to General Washington's ten thousand. Despite fierce fighting the British troops overwhelmed the Americans. The lieutenant's light infantry comprised an ambush rear guard and held the British grenadiers for a while. Later that night, under cover, they were the last unit to retreat. Silverheels knew he was developing a strange area of expertise—evacuation, rear-guard ambush, and retreat.

With these losses the British took Philadelphia.<sup>x</sup> The Continental Congress moved its operation to York, Pennsylvania. General Washington decided to strike back in a surprise attack on British forces at Germantown, which

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constituted the main British camp on the outskirts of Philadelphia.<sup>xi</sup> Alas, Silverheels suffered minor wounds in his hand as the attack failed.

The emotional wounds were greater than the physical wounds. Promotions were obtained by winning battles, not by evacuation and retreat when the day is lost. As he nursed his wounds, Silverheels once again remembered his mother's refrain. All right then! Let the others have their promotions. He would enjoy the company of his fellows. Their sacrifices would be his. He had developed a fondness for Madeira. Yet, he resolved that if they would have no Madeira, he would have no Madeira. He would be useful, not ornamental, and be good, not great.

Then, George Washington ordered, "Lieutenant John Marshall is, by the Judge Advocate General, appointed Deputy Judge Advocate in the Army of the United States, and is to be respected as such."<sup>xii</sup>

As he thought of this appointment, Lieutenant John Marshall, a.k.a. Silverheels, contemplated the possibility that perhaps the general he respected so much was sending him a message—go into the law! Indeed, Washington was. Although the general had respect for the bravery and

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soldiering ability of Lieutenant Marshall, he knew that the value of the young man was in the law.

He knew that John had enjoyed the teachings of a great man—his own father, Colonel Thomas Marshall. Indeed, Colonel Marshall had invented a surveying device for converting magnetic north to true north. It was called Marshall’s meridian instrument, and the Virginia Assembly required its use for all surveys. The older Marshall had received his education at the Campbelltown Academy, named for the man who had operated it, the Reverend Archibald Campbell.<sup>xiii</sup>

John would later write, “My Father possessed scarcely any fortune, and had received a very limited education—but was a man to whom nature had been bountiful, and who had assiduously improved her gifts. He superintended my education, and gave me an early taste for history and for poetry...to his care I am indebted for anything valuable which I may have acquired in my youth. He was my only intelligent companion; and was both a watchful parent and an affectionate instructive friend.”

Thomas also hired tutors for his young son. Indeed, John had transcribed the works of Alexander Pope when he was only twelve years of age. Silverheels always quoted

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from Pope's poem "An Essay on Man," "Know then thyself; presume not God to scan. The proper study of Mankind is Man."<sup>xiv</sup> When John was fourteen years of age, Colonel Marshall sent him to the Campbelltown Academy for one year.<sup>xv</sup>

Yes, Washington would send the young lieutenant into the law, and the life of John Marshall would never be the same.

Soon after his appointment, however, John found himself with Washington at Valley Forge. Lieutenant Marshall turned his attention to working with his men to build huts to provide greater protection from the elements than tents. Huts were desperately needed, as it had rained thirteen days from their arrival at Valley Forge to the end of January. The low temperatures for the winter months were as follows: December  $-6^{\circ}\text{F}$ , January  $-12^{\circ}\text{F}$ , February  $-16^{\circ}\text{F}$ , and March  $-8^{\circ}\text{F}$ . When the weather thawed, the camp would become a sea of mud, which would then freeze again. The cold would increase the risk of exposure, and the thaws would increase the risk of disease, which was rampant.

Over the years, some have imagined Washington's army shivering quietly in the cold. Au contraire, Valley

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Forge at that time was in a noisy state of chaos. There were no drills or roll calls. The men fought, gambled, sold supplies, and were absent without leave. While no one outright starved, many men just lost pound after pound. At night one could hear the groans of hunger from the men.

Rooming with John was a youth who had recently turned nineteen years of age—Lieutenant Philip Slaughter.<sup>xvi</sup> John could tell that the younger man was very cold and frightened. Silverheels would comfort him as he would a younger brother. He turned to Philip and told him that he would teach him and others how to play quoits.<sup>xvii</sup> Like horseshoes, the object of quoits was to throw a ring across a set distance to envelop a spike. If this did not happen, the secondary goal would be to get as close to the spike, hob, motte, or pin as possible. Philip marveled as Silverheels organized both races and games of quoits to break up the monotony.

Philip loved the way John made fun of himself. Philip later remembered, “At ten in the night, we were aroused from sleep. Lieutenant Marshall had raked up some leaves to sleep on. He had pulled off one of his stockings in the night (the only pair of silk stockings in the regiment); and not being able to find it in the dark, he set fire to the leaves, and before we saw it, a large hole had been burnt in it. He

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pulled it on so, and away we went.”<sup>xviii</sup> Philip laughed at John’s willingness to wear one of his mother’s stockings with a hole in it. Silverheels was now Noheels.

John Marshall certainly did not report this mistake to his mother, Mary Keith Marshall, for it was she who provided him material help that winter. His mother would send him clothes and blankets as fast as she and her friends could make them and have them delivered from Oak Hill, Virginia, to Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. Often John would not use them himself but gave them to the man in his unit most in need. His reputation as a good, generous man grew.

As his men felt he cared about them, they also sensed he was a fair man, a kind of an honest broker. Philip witnessed whenever a dispute occurred between two men, they would take the matter to John Marshall to resolve even outside of his official duties as deputy judge advocate. He did so in such a manner that both men felt his decision was just. This enhanced his reputation for judicial capacity, and he found himself more and more in the position of arbitrating disputes. As his reputation grew, many fellow officers would ask John Marshall to provide them with written opinions for them to reference.

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Though the winter at Valley Forge was a harsh experience, John Marshall felt surrounded by family as he made men like Philip Slaughter his brothers. In turn, Philip would remember Silverheels fondly: “He was the best-tempered man I ever knew. During his sufferings at Valley Forge, nothing discouraged, nothing disturbed him. If he had only bread to eat, it was just as well; if only meat, it made no difference. If any of the others murmured at their deprivations, he would shame them by good-natured raillery, or encourage them by his own exuberance of spirits. He was an excellent companion and idolized by the soldiers and his brother officers, whose gloomy hours were enlivened by his inexhaustible fund of anecdote.”<sup>xix</sup>

To repeat the conclusion on John Marshall, “He was the best-tempered man I ever knew.”



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## **Chapter 2: The Little Bastard**

“He will snatch me from ruin.”

The little bastard indeed felt he had been snatched from ruin as his ship set sail and the Caribbean island of Saint Croix grew smaller in the distance. Born on the West Indian island of Nevis, he was of illegitimate birth. His father, of Scottish lineage, had deserted the family, and his mother was deceased. Her estate was seized. When he and his brother were penniless, a cousin adopted them. Now he could recall the suicide of that cousin five years previously and the subsequent separation from his brother.

Oh, eventually things turned. A disaster started the turning when a hurricane ripped through the town where he lived, Christiansted.<sup>xx</sup> In response the young man wrote to the *Royal Danish American Gazette* about the hurricane and his awesome God: “He who gave the winds to blow, and the lightnings to rage—even Him I have always loved and served. His precepts have I observed. His commandments I have obeyed—and his perfections have I adored. He will snatch me from ruin. He will exalt me to the fellowship of Angels and Seraphs, and to the fullness of never ending joys.”<sup>xxi</sup>

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The lad had enjoyed the opportunity to study under Hugh Knox. The Reverend Mr. Knox himself had studied theology at the College of New Jersey. We know it today as Princeton University. The reverend's teacher had been another man of the cloth, as well as the president of the college, Aaron Burr. The Reverend Mr. Knox and others believed that the young man's essay on the hurricane, which was indeed published, was of such high caliber they should raise the money to send this young God-fearing orphan to the colonies for an education.

The little bastard was glad to leave his home for this opportunity, but he resolved that no one in his new world would ever know anything about his birth. No one would know the year he was born. He would become older or younger at will. He would remake himself anew. And no one would ever know he had been conceived not only out of wedlock but by a woman who had been married to another man who was not his father.

He would no longer be a little bastard.<sup>xxii</sup>

Many good things rushed by him. A brief year at grammar school to prepare him for college resulted in his admission to King's College in the city of New York. We know it today as Columbia University. He began with the

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study of medicine but then changed over to the law. While he did work hard, his natural curiosity made learning easier for him. At times it seemed any subject could be of interest to him. He quickly became a soldier-scholar, drilling and drilling before classes, publishing for the revolutionary cause, and engaging in both his formal classwork and informal study of military history.

The little bastard made his mark when he led a successful raid on the British.<sup>xxiii</sup> His raid for British cannons occurred under the fire of “His Majesty’s Ship,” *Asia*, the first sixty-four-gun ship! From this raid his group employed the cannons to form the New York Provincial Company of Artillery, and he was elected captain. He was now an officer in the army of George Washington.

After losing the Battle of Boston in early 1776, the British determined to take New York City. By September of 1776, Washington’s forces had retreated from Brooklyn and would now fight the Battle of Harlem Heights.<sup>xxiv</sup> When the New York Company met up with the general’s troops, he expected a band of brave but undisciplined men ready to fight for him. But after this victory, he saw the young captain and his troops drill and drill and drill again. Washington determined that he could employ this unit in the battle. The company of roughly sixty men would serve

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as decoys and lure the British into a trap where Washington's men would descend upon them from the Heights.

The plan seemed good. But soon after the battle commenced, his men were surrounded by the British, and the captain felt even shorter than his five-foot-six-inch frame. As he led his company men through the fight, he imagined them all being slaughtered. The captain now believed with all his heart that he was nothing more than a short, small bastard. The British blew their bugles and came right out into the open, as if they were on a fox hunt. Their contempt seemed justified.

Suddenly the captain heard gunfire. As he looked to ascertain its origins, he knew instinctively that it was friendly. But as he began to glimpse those who were providing cover for him and his men, he did not recognize the men. Now the British advance to the north was met by the descent of General Washington's troops from Harlem Heights. Though the British might have been stronger, they had to retreat.

The little bastard gazed up at Harlem Heights. On that beautiful September day, the Heights appeared as a piece of heaven on earth from which God's angels and seraphs had

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come down to earth to snatch him from ruin. He marveled at the beautiful piece of heaven and pondered that perhaps someday he would build a home up there. He might name such a place after his ancestral home in Scotland, the Grange.

The joy of victory would be short lived. Despite their loss at Harlem Heights, the British took New York City and chased Washington's ragtag forces out of the state of New Jersey. The army moved across Northern New Jersey and crossed the Delaware River into the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. New Jersey was now lost.

Along the way Washington's second-in-command, Charles Lee, was captured by the British.<sup>xxv</sup> Lee, whom the Indians once nicknamed Boiling Water, had lallygagged during the retreat.<sup>xxvi</sup> Lee was captured by the British, who mounted him, in his nightgown, on the horse of one of his officers, James Wilkinson. Wilkinson, somehow, had managed to escape. In despair Washington opined, "I think the game is pretty near up."<sup>xxvii</sup>

The general knew he must act. On Christmas Day, 1776, General Washington wrote, "I am determined, as the night is favorable, to cross the river and make the attack upon Trenton in the Morning."<sup>xxviii</sup>

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The little bastard had retreated across the river with the general. Although he now felt ill, the captain determined he would recross the river with the general.<sup>xxix</sup> That morning the wind came lightly out of the north, and it was cold, not even twenty degrees. Even with the wind, there was a cold silence and stillness.

The silence was broken by the sound of the captain's men, up for their early-morning drill. Later that morning the general ordered that every man be provided with food for three days and fresh flint. When the captain heard that order, he and his men drilled and drilled again.

In the afternoon the sky grew dark. A storm was brewing in the Atlantic Ocean off the Jersey coast. First a freezing rain came, and then a mixture of snow and sleet. Then, at four o'clock, the army assembled, as it did every evening. But instead of being dismissed, the troops were issued more ammunition to go with their muskets and flint. The general then gave the order for all to march to and assemble on the west side of the Delaware River.

The troops reached the west bank at five o'clock where the Durham boats were prepared and waiting. They were roughly sixty feet in length and three and a half feet deep. They were flat on the bottom and the sides, which made

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maneuvering the horses and other cargo onto the boats as simple as possible. The boats had no clearly defined fronts or backs, so those determinations were made prior to their loading.

The river was less than a mile wide and not all that deep. The snow and sleet brought ice flowing down the river. General Washington wanted his troops to land to the northwest of Trenton. While it was not his intent to travel north, he did not want the winds to carry them downriver to the south; hence, his troops had to fight the southward bias both of the current and of the wind by leaning to the left. Moreover, the general did not want ice cracking his ships and killing his horses, let alone the men. The boats were carrying not pounds but tons of weight.

The men would stick poles in the water to steady the boats and pull them northward, to the left, with the ice making this task more difficult. General Washington was among the first to cross, completing the task by six o'clock in the evening. He then watched from the east bank and directed the operation calmly. Yes, men rowed and poled valiantly, but others tended to the horses and cannons. The men who had reached the shore first stood on the east bank, throwing ropes. Many of the men on the boats grabbed the

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ropes and then teamed with the men on the bank to pull the boats safely to the shore.

The captain was now in charge of two cannons and thirty-six men. On that wintery Christmas night, he had but one concern—to ferry the cannons across the Delaware River. These two cannons were his lifeblood, and for the past several days he had focused both on them and on drilling and drilling the men responsible for them. The two cannons were ready to do their job; however, these two new friends were heavy. The prime responsibility for now was to steady the cannons and ferry them across the river. With threats from the river and the sky, he also had to keep his powder dry.

The operation concluded at three o'clock in the morning, three hours behind schedule. There would be no attack under the cover of darkness, as planned by General Washington. Exhausted from the crossing, the young captain now had to transport his men and cannons to Trenton and fight. Upon their arrival in the city, Washington's troops occupied the high ground on King and Queen Streets. The little bastard and his two cannons settled on the high ground on Queen Street. Now, on this Boxing Day, the captain felt like a tall giant or, at the very least, a strong little bastard.



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He was not occupying the low ground, acting as a decoy, as in the Battle of Harlem Heights. The captain could observe the Hessian forces preparing to advance up Queen Street. He gave the order. Fire! His two cannon friends roared. Soon, his cannons were joined by other cannon friends in other regiments. Fire! The advance of the enemy was halted. The Hessian guns on Queen Street were silenced.

George Washington took notice. The heroism of the New York captain at the Battles of Harlem Heights and Princeton was impressive. If these military accomplishments were not enough, the young man had written two pieces that greatly impressed General Washington.<sup>xxx</sup> The general was not one to pursue intellectual minutiae, but he did keep up with the political writings of his day. And the opinions of the young man, expressed in his writings, echoed many of the general's: "There is something noble and magnificent in the perspective of a great Federal Republic, closely linked in the pursuit of a common interest, tranquil and prosperous at home, respectable abroad; but there is something proportionably diminutive and contemptible in the prospect of a number of petty States, with the appearance only of union, jarring, jealous, and perverse, without any

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determined direction, fluctuating and unhappy at home, weak and insignificant by their dissensions in the eyes of other nations.”<sup>xxxix</sup>

General Washington had high expectations for the men on his staff. He wanted them to be men of education and sense. He did not require men of military knowledge but men who could quickly write good letters.<sup>xxxix</sup> In fact he had appointed another New York captain with solid military experience as aide-de-camp, and the man lasted less than a month. But this man was different.

Thus, George Washington ordered, “Alexander Hamilton Esquire is appointed Aide-De-Camp to the Commander in Chief; and is to be respected and obeyed as such.”<sup>xxxix</sup>

For the first time in his life, Alexander Hamilton felt he had a family, for at that time “family” was the term for the officers directly serving under the general. George Washington was childless. John Marshall had a living father, so Washington could not view him as a son. The other New York captain was indeed an orphan, but the two could never have anything resembling a father-son relationship. The general knew that Captain Hamilton was effectively an orphan.

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Yes, Washington would bring this young man into his family, and the life of Alexander Hamilton would never be the same.

Throughout most of 1777, the youth was either a secretary or messenger for Washington, albeit with rank, for he had also been promoted to lieutenant colonel. The colonel read correspondence and listened closely to learn from General Washington. He grew frustrated, as the year was comprised of several defeats.<sup>xxxiv</sup> The only bright spot were the American victories at the Battles of Saratoga.<sup>xxxv</sup>

He watched the commander in chief navigate his way through a strange plot to replace him, known as the Conway Cabal.<sup>xxxvi</sup> The plot had been revealed by James Wilkinson, the same man who had somehow managed to escape when Charles Lee was captured. Perhaps James Wilkinson had known and had even planned for what would happen, and perhaps he had not. The plot unraveled, however.

Now, winter at Valley Forge presented the new aide-de-camp with a whole host of problems for his inquisitive mind to solve. Colonel Hamilton lamented to New York governor George Clinton, "It is indeed to be wondered at, that the soldiery have manifested so unparalleled a degree

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of patience, as they have. If effectual measures are not speedily adopted, I know not how we shall keep the army together or make another campaign.”<sup>xxxvii</sup>

He learned quickly that funding was always less than needed to procure the desired resources—always! The young man committed himself to the proposition that the United States of America would always have a solid financial base. From that base of funding, supplies would be procured for its armed forces that would be the best they could be for the men in service of the country. And right now, that country was in Valley Forge.

As time passed, quiet victories were obtained at Valley Forge. Men were inoculated against smallpox. Martha Washington organized sewing circles to provide clothes. The men were drilled systematically by a Prussian baron.<sup>xxxviii</sup> Since the baron knew no English but did speak French, Colonel Hamilton’s French skills facilitated communication. Those skills also ingratiated him with a newly arrived volunteer from France, Marie-Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier, the Marquis de Lafayette.

Despite the successes and the new friends, Colonel Hamilton longed to return to battle. While he knew he was learning much, he felt his position was preventing his

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advancement. Indeed, James Wilkinson had somehow managed to procure a promotion to brigadier general by exaggerating his role at the Battles of Saratoga.<sup>xxxix</sup> Alexander Hamilton was ready to lead men into battle.

Twenty years later Alexander Hamilton would complain to George Washington, “[I]n the year 1777, the Regiment of Artillery were multiplied, I had good reason to expect that the command of one of them would have fallen to me had I not changed my situation; and this, in all probability, would have led further.”<sup>xl</sup>

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## **Chapter 3: Junior**

“To the doctrine of unconditional submission, he never gave his assent.”

That statement about Junior came from Matthew Livingston Davis, a man who knew him well. Davis was that man’s follower and biographer. Indeed, Davis knew that the man was naturally a fighter, for the statement describes not a grown man but a child. When Junior was roughly four years of age, “he ran away, and was not found until the third or fourth day after his departure from home; thus indicating, at a tender age, that fearlessness of mind, and determination to rely upon himself, which were characteristics stamped upon every subsequent act of his life.”<sup>xli</sup>

Six years later, at ten years of age, the boy had “a desire to make a voyage to sea; and, with this object in view, ran away...and came to the city of New York. He entered on board an outward-bound vessel as cabin-boy. He was, however, pursued by his guardian, and his place of retreat discovered.” One time, Junior “ran up the shrouds and clambered to the topgallant-mast head. Here he remained, and peremptorily refused to come down, or be

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taken down, until all the preliminaries of a treaty of peace were agreed upon. To the doctrine of unconditional submission, he never gave his assent.”<sup>xlii</sup>

The boy never really knew his father or grandfather, who were both men of the cloth. He was a toddler of two years of age when his grandfather died. His father died when he was only one year old, and his mother passed soon thereafter. Junior was an orphan for virtually his entire life. Yet despite this tragedy, he graduated from the College of New Jersey and studied law. His background was far more aristocratic than that of either Alexander Hamilton or John Marshall, and his education much finer.

As soon as the American Revolution began, he joined the fight. He marched with Benedict Arnold for three hundred miles through the land we now call the state of Maine to attack the city of Quebec. Junior traversed the Saint Lawrence River from Quebec City to Montreal and back to bring forces back to Quebec City for the battle. During the Battle of Quebec, at one point, he disguised himself as a priest.

He became a captain in the American army. In June of 1776, a friend wrote to him, “General Washington desired me to inform you that he will provide for you, and that he

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expects you will come to him immediately, and stay in his family.”<sup>xliii</sup> Yes, Washington would bring this young man into his family, and the life of the orphan would never be the same. Perhaps they could be the father and son neither ever had.

But by the end of June, Junior and Washington parted ways.<sup>xliv</sup> The captain wanted to fight. Indeed, he led the men whose fire rescued Alexander Hamilton at the Battle of Harlem Heights. After the battle the orphan gazed up at Harlem Heights. On that beautiful September day, he determined he wanted to make a home in the mansion Washington used as his temporary headquarters.

For most of his military career so far, the captain had professed no interest in advancement, writing, “We are not to judge of our own merit, and I am content to contribute my mite in any station.”<sup>xlv</sup>

Yet Washington decided to give the young man another chance, writing him, “You are hereby appointed Lieutenant Colonel to a Regiment in the Continental Service to be commanded by Colonel Malcolm.”<sup>xlvi</sup> The regiment, which had been authorized by the Continental Congress, was ordered to defend New Jersey on the west side of the Hudson River.



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Although its nominal commander was a wealthy New York merchant, the orphan would be the regiment's real commander of three hundred some-odd men.<sup>xlvii</sup> In fact the merchant once said to Junior, "You shall have all the honor of disciplining and fighting the regiment, while I will be its father."<sup>xlviii</sup> British troops would cross the Hudson River from east to west, from Manhattan to New Jersey, to conduct nighttime raids; the captain and his men would beat them back.

In July of 1777, Junior followed Alexander Hamilton in a promotion to lieutenant colonel. General Washington believed that a promotion to colonel and a new assignment should content the ambitious young man. He had been quite aware of the complaints over a lack of recognition since the Canadian Campaign. Washington would be proven incorrect.

Junior wrote to the general, "I was this morning favored with...my appointment...I am truly sensible of the honor done me, and shall be studious that my deportment in that station be such as will ensure your future esteem. I am nevertheless, sir, constrained to observe that the late date of my appointment subjects me to the command of many who are younger in the service and junior officers the last campaign...I would beg to know, whether it was any

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misconduct in me or extraordinary merit or services in them, which entitled the gentlemen lately put over me...or...whether I may not expect to be restored to that rank of which I have been deprived...as a decent attention to rank is both proper and necessary, I hope it will be excused in one who regards his honor next to the welfare of his country...I have the honor to be, with the greatest Respect, Your Excellency's very humble Servant, A. Burr."<sup>xlix</sup>

With this letter, this young man cut his ties with Washington's family, and the life of Aaron Burr Junior would never be the same.

At first sight of it, General Washington wanted to tear up this letter. Why was young Burr complaining? His rise was similar to that of Colonel Hamilton's and faster than that of his contemporary John Marshall. But the general knew better; this letter needed to be kept and studied. The young man's reputation was such that he could not be ignored, and at times he had proven useful.

Colonel Burr was the grandson of a very famous preacher, Jonathan Edwards, who had shaped the First Great Awakening. Burr was named after his father, who had served as president of the College of New Jersey.

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Washington was now thankful that Colonel Burr had left his work in his headquarters. He wanted this young man as far away from him as possible.

Several years later Davis reported that Washington had good reasons to feel this way: “[H]is prejudices against General Washington became fixed and unchangeable; and to the latest hour of his life, he recurred to the retreat from Long Island, and from the city of New-York, with acrimonious feelings towards the commander-in-chief. Whatever may be said to the contrary, as early as this period those prejudices were formed and confirmed. That General Washington placed no confidence in Burr, and that, for some reason, he was exceedingly hostile towards him, is equally certain.”<sup>1</sup>

Hence, when Washington retreated to Valley Forge, the general decided on the ideal assignment for Aaron Burr. Davis noted, “Within eight or ten miles of Valley Forge, there was a narrow and important pass, known as the Gulf.” It was an isolated pass controlling an important entry into the winter camp. Gulf Mills had been the spot where Washington’s army camped prior to moving to Valley Forge. Despite his reservations about Colonel Burr, the general knew that under this young man’s command, nothing would get in or out of the gulf.

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Davis reported, “Colonel Burr immediately commenced a rigid system of police, visiting every night, and at all hours of the night, the sentinels; changing their position, etc. During the day, he kept the troops under a constant drill. The rigor of this service was not adapted to the habits of militia, who had been accustomed to pass, in camp, a life of idleness, and to act as suited their individual whims and caprices. A portion of the most worthless became restless, and were determined to rid themselves of such a commander.

“Colonel Burr was notified of the contemplated mutiny, in which he would probably fall a victim. He ordered the detachment to be formed that night (it being a cold, bright moonlight), and secretly directed that all their cartridges should be drawn, so that there should not be a loaded musket on the ground. He provided himself with a good and well-sharpened sabre. He knew all the principal mutineers. He marched along the line, eying the men closely. When he came opposite to one of the most daring of the ringleaders, the soldier advanced a step, and levelled his musket at Colonel Burr.”

The man yelled, “Now is your time, my boys!”

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Davis continued, “Burr, being well prepared and in readiness, anticipating an assault, with a celerity for which he was remarkable, smote the arm of the mutineer above the elbow, and nearly severed it from his body, ordering him, at the same time, to take and keep his place in the line. In a few minutes, the men were dismissed, and the arm of the mutineer was next day amputated. No more was heard of the mutiny; nor were there afterwards, during Colonel Burr’s command, any false alarms...some of the officers talked of having Colonel Burr arrested, and tried by a court-martial, for the act; but the threat was never carried into execution.”<sup>li</sup>

Such was the desperate situation at Valley Forge that Washington chose to look the other way. But the general knew that Aaron Burr was a dangerous man. For the rest of his life, he would keep this man away from him. For the rest of his life, he would also do his best to keep this man out of any position of responsibility. He would make it a point to warn others as well.

In short Colonel Burr’s “prejudices against General Washington became fixed and unchangeable,” and the feeling was mutual.

# ***THE SUNSET OF GEORGE WASHINGTON***

## **Chapter 4: The Cocked-Hat Boy**

“These are the times that try men’s souls.”

The youth in the cocked hat read those words that Christmas morning of 1776. The text continued, “[T]he summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph.”<sup>lii</sup>

George Washington had distributed a pamphlet titled *The American Crisis* by Thomas Paine to inspire his men. The eighteen-year-old lad was moved and hoped to meet the author someday, but such a meeting would have to wait for the time being. There was another man he wished he could meet—King George the Third of Great Britain. He desired to end the life of that British despot. But that assignation too would have to wait. Perhaps he might soon slay some of the king’s minions.

The young lieutenant knew that something was afoot. Blankets had arrived, proving to be a much-needed Christmas Eve gift. That might have brought no notice, but

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when he heard that Durham boats had arrived and were hidden on the west side of the Delaware River, he suspected that Paine's inspiration was not for naught. For now, the lieutenant ascertained his hat was properly fitted; its brim turned up to give three-cornered appearance.

He felt so alone. He was now an orphan, having lost both of his parents in his teenage years. He felt that he had been robbed of his time with them, because, even when they were alive, he was sent away from them to attend the Campbelltown Academy. He had been baptized by Reverend Campbell and attended his school for five years. He envied John Marshall, who had attended Campbelltown for only one year and enjoyed many years at home with his parents. To add to his jealousy, both of Silverheels's parents were still alive, while both of his own were dead. Indeed, even in war, John was enjoying close contact with his father, with whom he served in the Virginia Third Regiment.

John Marshall had a precious possession that he lacked—a family.

The youth—a quiet, somber young man—had other reasons to envy John Marshall, who was almost three years older. Silverheels made close friends easily and learned

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quickly. By contrast, the youth was retiring and had to work hard to absorb his own formal education. He had to study subjects mostly by rote memory, such as Latin and mathematics. John demonstrated the ability to always enjoy himself, whereas the youth could not. He looked up to his older schoolmate but always was a tad jealous of him.

At the same time, he sometimes felt contempt for Silverheels. Even at Campbelltown, John paid no attention to his clothes, while the youth always dressed sharply. Now, the uniform of John Marshall seemed ill fitted, whereas the youth paid meticulous attention to his dress, particularly his hat. He owned some land, whereas John had come out of the woods. Yet, he also knew that he had financial woes that did not plague Silverheels.

Where John had distinctive black eyes with a speck of joy, the youth had sad, piercing blue eyes. Although he was a quiet and somber boy, the younger man would occasionally demonstrate flashes of anger, and when he did, he was a physical force with which to be reckoned. In fact on a spring day in his eighteenth year, instead of attending his class at the College of William and Mary, the boy in the cocked hat led a raid on the palace of the governor of Virginia.



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He and his mates returned to the college campus with three hundred swords and two hundred muskets. The young men proceeded to drill and were soon members of the Virginia infantry. He was appointed lieutenant, with the honor of serving as second-in-command to the cousin of the commander in chief of the American forces, George Washington.<sup>liii</sup>

Like John Marshall, he too was a member in the Virginia Third Regiment, and his status had changed from militiaman to an officer in Washington's army. He would share in the retreat across New Jersey and would find himself on the west side of the Delaware River on Christmas Day of 1776. Although the weather rose to the upper twenties, no one felt warm. For the youth, however, all the activity raised his adrenaline, and he did not mind the cold.

Upon completion of the crossing of the river, one group marched ahead. Among them was the lieutenant, as he would later remember, "at dusk they passed the Delaware in advance of the army, in the dusk of the evening, at Corrells ferry, ten miles above Trenton, and hastened to a point, about one and half mile from it, at which the road by which they descended, intersected, that, which led from Trenton to Princeton, for the purpose, in

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obedience to orders of cutting off all communication between them and from the country to Trenton. The night was tempestuous, as was the succeeding day, and made more severe, by a heavy fall of snow.”<sup>liv</sup>

It was now December 26, 1776, Boxing Day. Ahead of General Washington, the lieutenant was trying to march his troops silently to Trenton. They passed by a house where the owner’s dogs had other ideas. They barked and barked and barked. The lieutenant muttered to himself, cursing these hounds from hell. The man inside cried out to quiet his mutts, but the dogs would not cease.

He then put on his robe, went to the window, and spotted the young man in the cocked hat. He cursed the goddamn soldiers. Although he knew that the soldiers were powerful, that fact never would stop him from giving them grief. As he had many times before, the owner of the home went out his front door and yelled out into the dark for them to get off his land.

To the lieutenant this man appeared determined, profane, and violent. The young officer wanted no trouble. The young lieutenant spoke in his quiet voice, ordering the man to please go back into his home, or he would be taken prisoner. In response the man demanded who had given the

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young man the authority to take him prisoner. When the lieutenant responded it was General Washington, the man's tone suddenly and completely changed. The man apologized, revealing that he'd thought these men were British, not American troops.

The two introduced themselves, and the man invited the troops into his house. The lieutenant thanked him but demurred, informing the man that they had to be in Trenton as soon as possible after daybreak. They had marched since four o'clock in the morning. The owner of the house warned him that both the British and the Hessians were there, and he gave all the soldiers food.

As he and the lieutenant distributed the food to the men, he turned to them and asked to accompany the troop. He explained he was a doctor and might be of help to some poor fellow.<sup>lv</sup> The lieutenant immediately accepted the offer and proclaimed the doctor to be a surgeon volunteer. As the march resumed, the lieutenant could not help but wonder who might be the poor fellow this doctor helped.

At seven thirty in the morning, the troops were two miles away from Trenton. George Washington could spot to his front the Virginia Third Infantry. Legend has it the troops surprised the foolish Hessians who were either drunk

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or hungover. However, the Hessians were well-trained mercenaries, and there were also a few good British troops at Trenton.

The battle hinged on George Washington's tactics, which did indeed rely not only upon surprise but also upon occupation of the high ground. By eight o'clock in the morning, it was twenty degrees, and the winds were calm. In numbers Washington had twenty-four hundred troops, and the enemy fifteen hundred. He knew he had to move quickly. The general and his troops came down from the high ground. The lieutenant could hear Alexander Hamilton's cannons roaring from Queen Street.

On King Street the Hessians knew they had only a short window of opportunity to respond and obtain artillery from their enemy. The lieutenant became excited when he saw the enemy roll out a field gun onto King Street. Quickly his captain and he rushed toward the cannon, followed by six other men. As they fought for the cannon, his captain was shot in both hands and fell.

Once again, the lieutenant now felt the adrenaline. He quickly took command and ordered his men to turn the field gun toward the Hessians. He sensed victory over the Hessians was near. He would lead his men and would give

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the order to follow. He would run and capture the Hessians and—suddenly he felt a slight sting on his chest and then a sharp burn on his left shoulder.

He never sensed that he fell. His back felt suddenly very cold, and he became aware that the cold was coming from the ground on King Street. His hat was gone. Oh, now there was the great pain in his shoulder. The noise of the battle faded into the background, and his eyesight grew dim. Aside from the pain, he could feel a warm liquid on the front of his torso. He could...

The lad heard a voice yelling that he was dying, and he knew that it was true. It had been roughly two years since he'd lost his parents, and he would now join them. He could hear something like ripping and tearing. He could feel cold air, as if he had no shirt on him. As he tried to prepare himself for death, the pain in his shoulder grew even sharper, as he felt a finger pushing into the hole. The hurt...

The doctor rushed over to the young lieutenant he had met only about four hours earlier. A musket ball had severed an artery in the young man's left shoulder. He was hemorrhaging.<sup>lvi</sup> The physician repeated to himself that this poor fellow was dying. He ripped off the top of the youth's

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shirt and stuck his index finger in the wound. The doctor applied pressure and ordered that men come to carry the young soldier from the field.

The lieutenant alternated in and out of consciousness. He could feel soldiers lifting him off the ground. As they moved to safety, the physician kept his index finger in the hole. When they set the young man down, the doctor observed how much blood was leaving the man. When the bleeding lessened, he clamped the artery and attempted to find the bullet to take it out. But the bullet had moved toward the neck and could not be found. It would remain within his body for the rest of his life.

The battle ended quickly. A list of casualties was presented to the victor, George Washington. Hessian losses were over twenty men killed, over eighty seriously wounded, and the rest, roughly nine hundred, taken prisoner. He inquired about his losses. There were less than ten casualties. James Wilkinson, the young officer who had escaped when General Lee was captured, rode up with a message. General Washington took him by the hand, exclaiming, “Major Wilkinson, this is a glorious day for our country!”

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General Washington asked about the wounded. When he was told his cousin was wounded in both hands, the general's face grew grave. But he was told his cousin was doing well and would survive. He was then told of the fate of his cousin's lieutenant. After visiting his cousin, George Washington went to visit the wounded man and the physician who had saved his life.

The doctor revealed that the lieutenant would recover but recommended he be sent away to mend. He told the general of how he and this polite young man had met and the full tale of the youth's bravery. The older Virginia soldier, born in Westmoreland County, examined the younger Virginia soldier, also born in Westmoreland County, commended him, and sent him home to recuperate. The wounded man would later remember that he "was confined to his bed about 10 days, treated with great kindness and thence removed."<sup>vii</sup>

The next fall he returned to Washington's army mostly restored to health. For his pains he was promoted to captain but had no company to command. Perhaps the major joy in returning was making friends with the Marquis de La Fayette. He was happy the French might be joining the American effort. He felt an affinity for the French, as his

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ancestors were French Huguenot immigrants who had arrived in Virginia around 1700.

In the Battle of Brandywine Creek, the Marquis de La Fayette was wounded in the leg as he was directing the retreat. Although injured the marquis would not leave the field and persisted in commanding. The troops rallied under his leadership, but his wound became too much. When the new captain saw this, he empathized, reliving the battle in which he himself had been shot. Just as on Boxing Day, his adrenaline started to flow, and he immediately rushed to the marquis to tend to his wound. The two spent the night at Birmingham Church, where the captain tended the wounds of the marquis.<sup>lviii</sup>

The rise in rank for the cocked-hat boy continued. On the same day that John Marshall was appointed deputy judge advocate, George Washington ordered, “James Monroe Esquire, formerly appointed an additional Aide-de-Camp to Major General Lord Stirling, is now appointed Aide-de-Camp to his Lordship...and is to be respected as such.”<sup>lix</sup> Along with the order, he was now Major James Monroe. James was proud that he now outranked the older John Marshall by two levels.



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Yet James Monroe sensed John Marshall was the happier man. He would feel the bullet from Trenton burning inside him. As he felt the heat of that pain, a heat of hatred also burned inside him. He longed to encounter the hated King George the Third and avenge his wound. Yet instead of serving as a great warrior, he found himself playing the sniveling sycophant.

Wherever they were stationed, Lord Stirling's quarters were always decorated like a Scottish castle, its walls covered with tapestries. At night the Lord would bring out the scotch and relive the entire history of Scotland.<sup>lx</sup> James would have preferred a fine wine, and sometimes his lordship would accommodate the young man. But more often he would insist the young man pour him his scotch and join him in drinking this beverage that burned as it went down. Major James Monroe, hero of the Battle of Trenton and healer of La Fayette, was nothing but Lord Stirling's steward! This war was to throw off such symbols of the older order.

To comfort himself the lad would remove his cocked hat and would read and reread these inspiring words: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain

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unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

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## **Chapter 5: The Four Kings**

“Colonel Burr must wait till more field officers return to camp before he leaves it!”

George Washington’s complaint to Lord Stirling against Aaron Burr continued, “The daily application for discharges and furloughs distresses me beyond measure!”<sup>lxi</sup> His request refused, Colonel Burr’s resentments against Washington expanded to those of his generation whom Washington seemed to favor, particularly Alexander Hamilton and John Marshall.

Through his general orders, the general changed Alexander Hamilton from a bastard to a member of his family and changed John Marshall from Silverheels to a judge. James Monroe was no longer just the cocked-hat boy as he was given promotions. By contrast, Aaron Burr grew distant from the commander. Washington did not know he had set into motion events for his four young officers to interact with him and each other over a sixty-year period that would shape the federal republic through its infancy and childhood. The four would be shaped by their common experiences serving under General Washington but would respond in very different ways.

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The four men were born in a three-year period between 1755 and 1758.<sup>lxii</sup> The actual pecking order of the oldest to the youngest was unimportant. To be certain, while at Campbelltown Academy and in the early days of the revolution, the age difference between James and John came into play a little. But for the most part, they were generational equals.

These four officers could not be called the sons of the revolution. Perhaps the four could be considered Founding Fathers, but they did not guide the War of Independence, as did Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin. They were the four young officers of the revolution.

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<sup>i</sup>. Frances Norton Mason, *My Dearest Polly: Letters of Chief Justice John Marshall to His Wife, with Their Background, Political and Domestic 1779–1831* (Richmond: Garrett and Massie, 1961), p. 5, Library of Congress Catalogue Number 61-15099.

<sup>ii</sup>. Horace Binney, *Eulogy on the Life and Character of John Marshall, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States* (Philadelphia: J. Crissy and C. Goodman, 1835), pp. 22–24.

<sup>iii</sup>. All quotations from John Marshall's autobiography in this novel are obtained from *John Marshall Letter to Joseph Story*, 1827, <http://www.friendsofthehollow.org/letter.htm>.

<sup>iv</sup>. Mason (1961, p. 201) notes that these words constituted the epitaph on Mary Keith Marshall's gravestone.

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- v. Albert Jerimiah Beveridge, *The Life of John Marshall*, vol. I (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1919), pp. 73–74.
- vi. The Battle of Great Bridge occurred on December 9, 1775.
- vii. The summary of John Marshall’s 1777 military adventures is taken from Stephen J. McEwen Jr., *Chief Justice John Marshall: Soldier of the Revolution. Court Review* (American Judges Association, 2001), pp. 4–5.
- viii. The Battle of Iron Hill at Cooch’s Bridge, Delaware, September 3, 1777.
- ix. September 11, 1777.
- x. September 26, 1777.
- xi. October 4, 1777.
- xii. George Washington, General Orders, November 20, 1777.
- xiii. The Reverend Archibald Maciver Campbell (1708–1774). George Washington himself might have studied under Rev. Campbell.
- xiv. Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Man, Epistle II, Verses 1 and 2* (London: printed by John Wright, for Lawton Gilliver, 1733), <http://www.eighteenthcenturypoetry.org/works/o3676-w0010.shtml>.
- xv. Henry Howe, *Historical Collections of Virginia* (Charleston: W. R. Babcock, 1847), p. 262.
- xvi. Philip Slaughter (December 4, 1758, to December 4, 1849).
- xvii. The athleticism of John Marshall and the origin of the Silverheels nickname are documented in James Bradley Thayer, *John Marshall* (Boston: Houghlin Mifflin, 1901), pp. 12–13.
- xviii. Philip Slaughter, *A History of St. Mark’s Parish, Culpeper County, Virginia* (Baltimore: Innes, 1877), p. 108.
- xix. Henry Howe, *Historical Collections of Virginia* (Charleston: W. R. Babcock, 1847), p. 266.
- xx. August 30, 1772.
- xxi. Alexander Hamilton letter to the Royal Danish Gazette, September 6, 1772.
- xxii. The phrase for Alexander Hamilton is derived from a John Adams letter to Benjamin Rush, January 25, 1806, in which he references “a bastard brat of a Scotch Pedler.”
- xxiii. August 23, 1775. See Ron Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton* (New York: Penguin, 2004), p. 67, ISBN 1-59420-009-2.
- xxiv. September 16, 1776.
- xxv. Charles Lee was captured on December 13, 1776.
- xxvi. This portrait of Charles Lee is drawn from Joseph J. Ellis, *His Excellency: George Washington* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), pp. 80–81.
- xxvii. George Washington letter to his brother Samuel, December 18, 1776.

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- xxviii. George Washington letter to Colonel John Cadwalader, December 25, 1776.
- xxix. See Ron Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton* (New York: Penguin, 2004), p. 84, ISBN 1-59420-009-2.
- xxx. Alexander Hamilton, *A Full Vindication of the Measures of Congress* (December 15, 1774) and *The Farmer Refuted* (February 23, 1775).
- xxxi. Alexander Hamilton, *The Farmer Refuted* (February 23, 1775).
- xxxii. George Washington letter to Robert Hanson Harrison, January 9, 1777, stating, "If they can write a good letter, write quick, are methodical and diligent, it is all I expect to find in my aids."
- xxxiii. George Washington, General Orders, March 1, 1777.
- xxxiv. The defeats included the battles of Brandywine Creek, Iron Hill, and Germantown.
- xxxv. September 19 and October 7, 1777.
- xxxvi. Named after General Thomas Conway (1735–1800).
- xxxvii. Alexander Hamilton letter to George Clinton, February 13, 1778.
- xxxviii. Friedrich Wilhelm Ludolf Gerhard Augustin von Steuben; also referred to as the Baron von Steuben (1730–1794).
- xxxix. November 6, 1777.
- xl. Alexander Hamilton letter to George Washington, July 29 and August 1, 1798.
- xli. Matthew L. Davis, *Memoirs of Aaron Burr*, vol. I (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1837), p. 25.
- xlii. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
- xliii. Matthias Ogden letter to Aaron Burr, June 5, 1776.
- xliv. George Washington General Orders, June 22, 1776.
- xlv. Aaron Burr letter to Matthew Ogden, March 1777.
- xlvi. George Washington letter to Aaron Burr, June 27, 1777.
- xlvii. William Malcolm (1745–1791).
- xlviii. Davis, *Memoirs of Aaron Burr*, p. 112.
- xliv. Aaron Burr letter to George Washington, July 20, 1777.
- i. Davis, *Memoirs of Aaron Burr*, pp. 122–23.
- ii. *Ibid.*, pp. 119–21.
- iii. Thomas Paine, *The American Crisis* (December 19, 1776).
- liii. William Washington (1752–1810).
- liv. "Draft Note: The Continental Army, January 1776 – July 1777" from *The Autobiography of James Monroe, James Monroe Papers*.
- lv. Doctor John Berrien Riker (1738–1794).
- lvi. Harlow Giles Unger, *The Last Founding Father: James Monroe and a Nation's Call to Greatness* (Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2009), p. 26.
- lvii. "Draft Note: The Continental Army, January 1776 – July 1777."

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<sup>lviii</sup>. Unger, *The Last Founding Father*, p. 29.

<sup>lix</sup>. George Washington, General Orders, November 20, 1777.

<sup>lx</sup>. William Alexander, Lord Stirling (1726–1783).

<sup>lxi</sup>. George Washington letter to Lord Stirling, March 21, 1778.

<sup>lxii</sup>. John Marshall may have been the eldest, born on September 24, 1755. The word “may” is used because no one knows precisely when Alexander Hamilton was born. The month and the day appear firm as January 11. However, at various points, he gave out the year as 1755 and 1757. If it were 1755, he would have been the eldest. Note that he never claimed 1756, just 1755 or 1757. Aaron Burr was born on February 6, 1756. The youngest was clearly James Monroe, born on April 28, 1758.