

A Stick, A Star and A Storm

By: Sloan Boudreaux

I remember the night perfectly. It was pouring rain like never before. It was April 26, 1777. I was barely sixteen.

"Shh Abigail. Listen to the rain and fall asleep." I whispered to my younger sister.

I was a normal teenager in 1777. But not that night. That night I became a figure in history.

Abigail drifted off softly as I sat next to her crib humming.

Knock knock knock!

The sound boomed through the house frantically. Abigail stirred but didn't wake.

I walked to the door. A man stood on the porch, soaked as he spoke to my father.

"The British," the man panted as my father looked at the crowd of my family surrounding.

"They're approaching Danbury."

The messenger panted as my mother helped him into a chair and motioned for me to grab the man a towel.

By the time I came back my father was quietly speaking to the man.

"I can't go any further." The man said his breathing finally evening from the shallow ragged breaths that he had before.

"I have to organize the troops," my father, Colonel Henry Ludington said to the man.

"I'll go!" I said before actually thinking it through. Everyone froze and turned to look at me. My mother gasped.

"You can't!" She cried with eyes so wide I thought they might have actually fallen out. "It's too dangerous! Tell her Henry! She can't!"

"Please! I've done much worse! I can take Star! I'll be safe! I promise!" I pleaded with wide eyes. My father looked at my mother and sighed.

"Fine. You must swear you will be careful." My father said, I smiled widely and ran to mount my horse.

"Come on Star," I whispered softly, grabbing his saddle. "We're taking a trip."

I walked him outside and paused. I needed something to defend myself. I didn't have a gun, I didn't have a knife. I had a big stick.

I looked out and squinted. I could barely see five feet in front of me. I sighed and got on Star's back.

"Let's go boy," I said, gripping his slippery leather reins with one hand and the other clutching the heavy stick.

He rode through the path which on a normal night would be beautiful, but tonight it felt like he was running through quick sand. It was so mushy. My dress was soaked within minutes. It was pouring so hard.

I knew the forest was just crawling with British spies and outlaws waiting to rob someone just like me.

I took a deep breath and banged my stick against the shutters of the first house.

"THE BRITISH ARE APPROACHING DANBURY! MUSTER AT THE LUDINGTON'S!" I yelled loudly praying the family would wake.

By the time I hit mile twenty my throat was burning and scratching, I knew Star was getting tired but I had to continue. I had to, not just for my family, not just for the town. But for the future of America.

By the time I reached mile forty my arms ached so bad I thought they might detach from my body and I was sure if I spoke one more word I would lose my voice permanently.

By the time I got home it was morning. My body hurt and I felt as if I'd just collapse off Star right then and there.

I expected to just see a few people. Twenty maybe. I thought people didn't hear me or didn't come.

But as I looked up, I saw hundreds of men with muskets. And in the middle of it all was my father with a proud smile.

"Sybil! You're back!" My mother yelled running towards me and pulling me into a tight hug.

My father walked over next, his eyes shining as he patted Star's wet neck. "Over four hundred men came because of you, Sybil. You saved us. Thank you." Hearing those words made the burning in my throat and the deep ache in my arms completely disappear.

The war raged on for years but no one forgot that night. Sometime later, General George Washington himself came to our home just to thank me. Imagine that, the commander of the whole army, thanking a teenage girl from New York.

Decades have passed since that wild ride. I am much older, inside the tavern I run. I have a child. But sometimes, when the April wind howls outside and the rain bangs against the tavern windows, I look out into the dark and smile. I was just a sixteen-year-old girl with a wooden stick and a trusted horse in a storm. But together, we helped build a nation.