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PROLOGUE

This book is the third in a series of stories about the Monroe family in early America. And who knows? If the books keep going we might even work our way down to the present day.

The first book, *Blackthorn Winter*, is about a young man named Thomas Ingle, who lives with his mother, Sarah. Thomas's father was lost at sea (probably in a battle with pirates), and Thomas desperately wants to go to sea. His mother finally lets him, reluctantly, and he is apprenticed to a Captain Monroe. In the course of their adventures, Thomas discovers a pirate treasure, Captain Monroe marries Thomas's mother, Sarah, and they buy the land that the treasure is on. The treasure becomes the basis for the Monroe family fortune. The book is set in the very first part of the 1700s, when pirates on the Chesapeake Bay were not uncommon.

The second book in this series is called *Susan Creek* and is set in the late 1740s, the time of the First Great Awakening. The young hero is John Monroe, the grandson of Captain Monroe and Sarah of the first book. His parents are Thomas Monroe and Jane (Thomas had been named after his much older step-brother, Thomas Ingle). John has been apprenticed to sea before he goes back to work in the family business. On this particular voyage to Scotland, he meets a young girl named Jenny Geddes and gets swept up into an adventure involving a British officer who is spying for the French. George Whitefield and his preaching enter the story in several ways, and the story ends with John and Jenny getting married, and with a young son.

This third story concerns the three sons of John and Jenny Monroe and their adventures in the American War for Independence. The oldest son is William, who is an officer in the Continental Navy. We met him as a toddler at the very end of *Susan Creek*. The second son is named Robert, and he is fighting with Morgan's Rifles. They had distinguished themselves at the battle of Saratoga and show up in this book at the battle of Cowpens. But the youngest son, Stephen, is the main character in the book. To find out what happens to *him*, you will just have to read it.

Chapter One
A T O R Y T A V E R N

“T ell me again what happened after Captain Jones defied Pearson.” Stephen Monroe sat with his back against the wall of the Jamestown tavern, and next to him sat his older brother, William. William Monroe had been a lieutenant just the previous year, serving under John Paul Jones. He had acquitted himself so well in the battle between the *Serapis* and the *Bon Homme Richard* that when they returned to America, he had been given a commission—a ship of his own: the *Susquehanna*.

“Well,” said William, “Pearson called upon our captain to strike his colors, and Captain Jones just stood there, saber in hand, musket balls flying past him, and shouted that he had not yet begun to fight. That stirred every man of us, I don’t mind telling you. Their guns had taken out much of our starboard battery, and we didn’t have many gunners

left either. We sent the marines up into the rigging, and bless them if they didn't shoot like a pack of wizards. They raked the decks of the *Serapis*—I have never seen shooting like that, never.”

Stephen was taller than his brother when he was sitting down, and when they were standing he was *almost* taller. But he was also thirteen years the younger, and this meant that although they were not close as brothers, Stephen had always looked up to William as one might an especially important uncle. “What happened next?” Stephen was done with his stew, and his brother was nowhere close. William was not nearly as stiff as he seemed to his brother, and he could tell a sea story as well as any of his mates—but in talking like this to his brother he always felt like he was stoking a fire that was already too hot and high.

“The *Bon Homme Richard* was taking on water, and settling into the sea, sluggish like. We couldn't maneuver, and so Captain Jones tied our bow off to the side of the *Serapis*, and we just went at it, hammer and tongs. They were preparing a sortie to board us, and so Captain Jones just nodded at me to do something. So I took about seven lads who were with me, and we attacked them, right up the middle. God showed favor to us that day—there was no reason for us to win that battle. And after we won, *our* ship sank, and we had to sail off in theirs.”

“That's *it*? You just told me that there was some fighting, and then it was over.”

William laughed in spite of himself. “Well, because of how the ships were lashed together, we had to run single file,

and jump from our bowsprit, and not spread out shoulder to shoulder until we were on their forward deck. I was first, and three of us got there before they saw our plan. It was all sabers, and for some moments there all I saw was sabers. A man named Huggins saved my life—twice I think, maybe three times. I had my saber knocked out of my hand by some ruffian, who seemed extremely interested in the color of my insides. Huggins split him like he was chopping wood on a Saturday evening . . . I got my saber back, and by that time, all seven of us were there. We gave them what for, and that's the truth of it."

Stephen was about to ask yet another question, but he suddenly yelled, jumping in his seat instead. From across the tavern, a pewter mug sailed right past his head and struck the wall behind him, spattering ale everywhere.

William was on his feet instantly, and Stephen quickly stood up beside him. Stephen had no weapons with him, but William had both a saber and a pistol. From across the tavern, a large figure began to weave toward them. Behind him were several others.

The two brothers waited until their visitor was a few steps away, with only a table between them. "And did ye not know," the man began, "that this is not a Whig establishment? We offer victuals and drink for *Tories*, and for any honest souls who are loyal to their king."

William bent slightly at the waist. "I did not know," he said. "We are strangers in your town. We would be happy, under the present circumstances, to pay our bill, and take

our leave.” With that he reached toward his pouch to bring out his payment.

The innkeeper (for it *was* the innkeeper) held up his hand. He stopped for a moment, still weaving, and then lowered his hand again. The men behind him looked slightly apologetic. “Keep your continentals,” he said. “*Worthless.*”

William started to say that he would pay with silver, but the innkeeper held up his hand again. His dark hair was greasy, tucked behind his right ear. He was in his cups, and *when* he was in his cups, he was the kind of drunk who wanted to talk politics.

“Here’s how ye may pay the bill,” he said. “Answer me three questions.”

“I see,” said Captain Monroe, sucking on his teeth. “And must we answer the questions to your satisfaction? Or just answer the questions?”

“Aye. I take your point.” The innkeeper stood there pretending to be puzzled for a moment, and Stephen thought briefly that he was the kind of man that he might like. If he was sober. And if there were no war going.

The innkeeper turned around and looked at the fellows who stood behind him, who had been hanging back somewhat uncertainly. “*You,*” he said, pointing to one of them. “You are the judge. You were a Whig before you got paroled. You’ve been on both sides. Sit here.” With that the innkeeper pulled a chair behind a nearby table, and pushed the young man down into it.

“Now,” he said, turning around. “King George is my lawful sovereign. Why is he not yours?”

Stephen stepped forward as though he was going to blurt out an answer, but a glance from his brother stopped him. The Monroes had been over this countless times at the dinner table—their father had actually had to *decide* what he was going to do when the war broke out. They had friends and family on both sides, and the issues had not been a simple one for them—except for Stephen.

William rested his hands on his belt, and looked straight into the innkeeper's eyes, which was hard because the innkeeper kept looking at the floor. Captain Monroe was an imposing figure when he was standing, and not eating stew, and when he was this close.

“The king *was* my sovereign. And as such, he had a responsibility as my liege lord to protect me and my family from those who had no such sovereignty, but who sought to exercise it anyway. When Parliament took up the pretense that they were the legislative body for Maryland, when we already had our representatives, the king had a duty to intervene and stay their grasping hand. With Parliament I had nothing to do, and under the ancient rights of Englishmen, I had every right to expect the king to defend us. This duty he refused. And when a liege lord refuses the duty of protection, the vassal is released from the obligations of allegiance.”

It was clear to Stephen that the innkeeper had not followed any of this, and it was not surprising to him because *he* had trouble following it. He thought William ought to have simply said that the king was trampling on the rights of man. And had he said this, it would have been on the innkeeper's level, because when *he* usually talked politics, the debate usually

amounted to a lusty shout of long life to King George, followed by a fist fight with those who would not drink to his health. Stephen glanced at the young man who had been impressed into the duties of the judge (whose name was Tom) who *was* following the answer, and he was looking increasingly nervous.

The innkeeper cleared his throat when it became obvious that Captain Monroe had finished, and continued, “Does not the good book say that we are to obey the existing authorities?”

Stephen smiled to himself. The good book also had things to say about getting drunk and heaving pewter mugs at the guests. But Captain Monroe just shook his head.

“King Charles claimed that passage as part of his divine right before he lost his head. But the apostle plainly says in that place that the magistrates are God’s servants and are not absolute. They are appointed to their servant’s station to reward the righteous and punish the evil doer. The apostle does not contemplate the circumstance when the magistrate rewards the evil doer and punishes the righteous. And if my handling of the sacred text be wrong, it is at least the handling of it that was approved by the rulers of England in the Glorious Revolution of 1688. We have maintained nothing in this war for independence except what was established by our rulers as part of common law, before you or I were born.”

Stephen looked sideways at Tom, the reluctant judge, who was staring at his judge’s bench and was drawing pictures with the spilt ale there. He seemed absorbed in something else, although he wasn’t. Stephen looked up at his

brother with exasperation. *Why not just say that friends of tyrants are enemies of God? Why give an answer full of words?*

The innkeeper's face was redder than it had been. He was intent on his fight, but he needed something he could understand. He finally decided to dispense with the finer points of politics. "Have you raised arms against our king?"

"I have. I fought with Captain John Paul Jones when we took the *Serapis* . . ."

With that the innkeeper roared, lowered his head, and ran straight at William. William stepped aside easily and clapped a hand to the innkeeper's back, which sent him sprawling into a duster of chairs. "Come on, Stephen," William said, and stepped toward the door. They both blinked coming out into the sunlight and were two streets down the way before anyone spoke. William suddenly stopped.

"What is it?"

"We forgot to pay." William was rummaging in his pouch for the coins.

"Don't you think he forfeited it? You answered that old loblolly's questions, and to *spare*."

But William ignored the taunt, turned back, and they made their way back to the inn. When they got there, they found judge Tom leaning against the doorpost, looking up toward the afternoon sun. William touched him on the shoulder, which made him jump, and then offered him the coins. Tom smiled, nodded, and took them.

"You were paroled?" Stephen asked Tom, hoping for a story with some action in it.

“Yes. I fought with the Whig militia when the war broke out. I was captured a year ago in a skirmish near Colcock Creek. I was released on parole and haven’t seen action since. My mother is happy about it, fair enough. I sometimes think of breaking my word—especially when I hear things like that in there.”

Stephen started to say that every friend of liberty should take the field, but Captain Monroe interrupted, shaking his head. “No—keep your word. We are fighting because the king wouldn’t.”

With that they began to go, but they stopped when Tom called them back. “One more thing?” William nodded, so he went on. “Don’t be hard in your thoughts on my master, old Nob. He lost two boys in the first month of the war. He didn’t used to drink. He is a simple man, and I don’t think he can make it here if we win. He’ll have to go to Halifax.”

William nodded, and Stephen didn’t know what to do, so they turned toward the harbor. They walked several furlongs when William suddenly said, “Stephen, that’s one more thing to remember about my story. Every man we killed on the *Serapis* was a mother’s son, and back in some English shire it may be there is a poor innkeeper who drinks too much.”

Stephen was silent, but after a moment, he asked—“But wouldn’t you do it again?”

“Of course,” William said, “but always remember that war is a splendid and terrible duty. It is not a diversion.”

Chapter Two
LADY HUNTINGTON

Whenever Lieutenant William Morris was angry, he would simply swallow and grow a little colder. An intense and disciplined man, he was not given to outbursts, but the anger was still there, each incident taking it a little deeper. Hungry for glory, he had surpassed heroism in several encounters with the Royal Navy and was known throughout the small Continental fleet. After the last encounter, off the coast of Carolina, in which the captain of the *Susquehanna* had been mortally wounded, he had fully expected his long-delayed promotion. Now there should be no good reason for him not to become the captain of the ship, a ship he had served on since the very beginning of the war. Morris had twice previously been passed over for this promotion by the Continental Congress—once because of the ordinary kind of petty politics that swirl around all legislative bodies, and the second time because of