

# The Price For Freedom

I stood in the middle of my ruined warehouse, smelling dust, seeing it glissén in the air from the reflection of the sun piercing through the shattered window. Boxes with my beloved longings were broken and thrown throughout my brown, tarnished wood floor. These contained items that I had worked so hard to import, which were now broken underfoot. My hands shook as I remanenced in anger, picking up the leftover pieces of my beloved work that were covered with filth. Constant thoughts were running through my head, asking myself, "This was more than just a business, but it was my life's work and more importantly, my family's future, so just why?"

A British soldier, wearing his bright red coat, smirking at me, then appeared. "Consider this a lesson, Hughes. You're lucky we didn't take you in, as the Crown isn't kind to traitors," he said.

I clenched my fists in agony, blood rushing through my head, nails digging into my palms. I then questioned his response, "Traitors? Who did you get this information from? I was just a merchant trying to provide for my family you fool!" The man stared at me with a disgraceful face, as if he didn't believe me as he clenched his musket. "I do no ones answering but the Kings," he said. "Papa?" a small voice called from the doorway as he peaked to see what was happening. Grabbing my attention, forgetting what has just been done, I turned to see my youngest son, Elias, as he held his toy teddy bear. His glossy but fearful eyes broke me. I picked him up and pulled him into my arms almost instantly. "It's going to be okay son. Papa is going to figure it out," I whispered in his ear. As I said this, I knew I was lying to myself, but also to him. How could I have made a promise to him that everything would be all right when I wasn't even sure about it myself? From that moment going forward, I made a silent promise to fight for my family's future and for myself.

The days that followed were just a blur of anger, determination, and revengfullness.

My wife, Carolina, pleaded with me to reconsider my choice to join the war effort. "Oliver, think of our children!" she said in a screaming and utterly shocking voice. "What will happen to us if you're gone? We have nowhere to go and no family nebeary!" I then took her pale hands and folded them with mine, feeling her tremble with fear. "But what will happen if I do nothing?" I replied to her. "The British have taken everything from us. If we don't fight now, there will be nothing left for our children and their future." Tears then streamed down her face as she grabbed my hands tighter, but she nodded. She knew, unfortunately. I was right. Leaving my family was the hardest thing I had ever done in my life. But knowing it was for the greater good didn't make me question my choice. Archie, who was my oldest son, tried to be brave and wanted to join me, but he was too young. I could see the fear in his eyes, knowing he wouldn't survive. Coraline, who was my only daughter, clung to my leg and wouldn't let go. And Elias just stared at me, clutching his toy teddy bear tightly in his hand. I'll never forget the way he stared at me as well, it will be engraved in my memory forever. "I'll come back," I promised them, though I wasn't sure if it was a promise I could keep. The morning of June 17, 1775, was clear and bright, but the air was thick, smelling of the musk of other men that filled my nose. Here I stood on top of Breed's Hill, which was the first point in our camp, looking down at a line of red moving toward us. Their bright red coats stood out against the dead grass, and their bayonets caused reflections on the ground below. My heart was pounding in my chest as I did not know what to do and what would happen to me. "Hold your fire!" I then shouted to the men around me, causing a scene. My voice was louder and stronger than any other man in the camp. But I realized I wasn't a soldier, but just a merchant from New York with a family. Here I was, though, leading many men into battle, waiting on my command. The British kept coming, their drums beating louder and louder. My hands tightened around my musket. "Wait for it," I muttered, my eyes locked on the

enemy. "Fire!" The crack of muskets caused my ears to ring, and white smoke filled the air. My shoulder ached from the recoil of the musket, but I reloaded as quickly as I could. The British didn't stop. They kept coming, wave after wave, their numbers started to be overwhelming, and we were running out of ammo.

"Fall back!" I yelled to the men when the British got too close. "Retreat to Bunker Hill!" As I turned to help my man beside me, a sharp pain hit me in the left side of my stomach. I struggle to pick my man up and fell to the ground. The world around me seemed to turn white as I closed my eyes. Listening to the sounds of battle mixed with shouts, dirt, gunfire, and drums fade into the abyss of silence. I then woke up in a field hospital. My blue uniform was stained with blood as it mixed with the fabric, turning into a hue of purple. A medic knelt beside me, his face uneasy. "You've lost a lot of blood," he said. "I'm sorry, but there's nothing more I can do." I nodded, feeling strangely calm. "Can I have some paper and a quill?" I asked. The surgeon handed them to me, and I began to write, my hands shaking.

\*My dearest Carolina, If you're reading this, I'm gone. I didn't fight for glory, but I fought for you and our children's safety and future. I wanted to give you a place where you could live free, without fear. Don't be sad, my dear. Teach Archie, Coraline, and Elias to be brave and to stand up for what's right, even when it's challenging.

Tell them to never give up.

I love you, always.

Your one and only,

Oliver

She was anxious constantly to hear from me and what had happened. Weeks later, Carolina finally received my letter. She read it to our children, her voice breaking as she spoke the last words. “Your father was a hero,” she said, hugging Archie, Coraline, and Elias tightly. “He fought for us, for our freedom. We must honor him by living the life he wanted for us.” The family left New York and moved south to start over as I intended. Even though I was dead, my sacrifice wasn’t in vain. My children were bound to grow up in a free country. A country that I gave my life for...