OPENING SHOT BEFORE THE CREDITS

Panorama of Savannah in November, 1774. Night falls over the harbor and the town, closing in on River Street.

EXT. SAVANNAH, GEORGIA NIGHT

Dacey Flynn runs to the end of an alley pursued by a thin, scruffy man. She races down the passageway to the end: a fence and a privy. She turns to face her pursuer. The bald-headed ruffian grabs her by the arms.

BOUNTY HUNTER

(sneers) Goin' to a party?

DACEY

Let go! Take your hands off me.

She fights like a Fury as his rough hands climb her sleeves. She wrenches herself free, ripping the lace cuffs of the gown, and pounds his chest. He drags her, trying to pick her up. They tussle and she breaks free, hurling herself toward the street, and bumps smack into a tall, sturdy man. He steadies her with arms so strong, she can't pull away. She pounds his silk waistcoat.

JOSEPH HABERSHAM

I beg your pardon.

The gentleman lets go and Dacey edges past them both, dusting off her skirts.

To what do I owe this rare pleasure?

BOUNTY HUNTER

Watch out. She fights like a wildcat.

HABERSHAM

You frightened her.

BOUNTY HUNTER

Begging your pardon, she's a runaway, bonded servant.

DACEY

Do I look like anybody's servant?

Dacey straightens the torn lace of her sleeve as she addresses the gentleman, his wavy brown hair pulled back in a ribbon. A lamp behind a curtain reflects in light eyes that assess her. Defiant, she raises the brim of her straw bonnet. The bald man unfolds an advertisement.

BOUNTY HUNTER

Ran away from the subscriber, A Servant Girl named Dacey Flynn, about twenty years of age, five feet five inches high. She has a very bold look, and is ignorant and saucy. Had on and took with her, one cotton and linen gown, light green, three striped linsey petticoats, chemise and pettislip.

HABERSHAM

That's enough. You may go.

BOUNTY HUNTER

One shilling sterling reward. Isabella Rae.

HABERSHAM

Who? Belle Rae?

BOUNTY HUNTER

Miz Isabella Rae.

HABERSHAM

Let me have that. I'll decide what's to be done.

BOUNTY HUNTER

Pay me a shilling.

The gentlemen pays him and the bounty hunter hands over the notice and departs. The gentleman stares after him.

DACEY

(mutters) One shilling. She only said that to vex me.

Breathless from the run in corset and stays, she takes a few steps and faints. She sags and the gentleman catches her in a firm embrace.

Flashback to Barbados dock, Dacey and her younger brother have their papers bought up. Derry ships aboard a British merchant, and Dacey goes with old Captain Rae.

Flashback to Rae's Hall. Dacey enters the plantation house as a parlor maid, but is given sewing to do and becomes seamstress to his imperious daughter Isabella, a young lady of finer stuff. Isabella plays games on the help. When they quarrel, she changes Dacey's task from spinning flax to plowing the field.

Flashback to Rae's Hall field.

DACEY

I'm not cut out for the plow.

Isabella harkens to the mule as if he were telling her something.

ISABELLA

What's that, Caesar? You don't like to plow either?

She calls the overseer.

Come here, Johnson, and hook Dacey to the plow.

Everyone laughs as Dacey stands in harness. Just to show them, she pulls a deep furrow. They fall silent.

Back to present day.

HABERSHAM

Where do you live? Let me escort you to your home.

She looks down his fitted breeches and white stockings to his silver-buckled shoes.

DACEY

I am a stranger in Savannah, sir. Just arrived on the packet.

HABERSHAM

With no address? No letter of introduction?

She straightens the straw bonnet trimmed with silk flowers, reties the long ribbons under her hair, and flips her shoulder scarf into place.

DACEY

I was recommended a boarding house on...King Street, but I have lost the address.

HABERSHAM

King Street? I don't know of any boarding house fit for a lady.

They walk across a green square where deep shadows loom under magnolias.

What is your name, miss?

She looks down.

DACEY

Dacey.

HABERSHAM

Dacey Flynn?

DACEY

Yes, sir.

HABERSHAM

My name is Joseph Habersham. Allow me to offer you a place to stay the night, at my father's house on Abercorn.

DACEY

That is kind of you, sir.

She follows him over cobblestones and packed dirt to another corner. The house stands across from a leafy park of palmettos. Its whitewashed red brick, the sun has faded to pink. A lantern with four candles hangs from the ceiling of the portico, flanked by white columns.

DACEY

(exclaims) What a fine house!

As they stand on the porch, Joseph looks at her closely. She lowers her head, but he gently raises her chin. He looks pleased. Her innocent looks have won over many a man. Her skin is fair, but her hair is losing its curl.

HABERSHAM

I shall need a fine story. What shall I invent? That you are a serving maid, would that suit you, Dacey?

DACEY

It wouldn't suit me, but it will do.

A dark-skinned butler opens the door and takes Joseph's tricorner hat.

JOSEPH HABERSHAM

Thank you, Henry. Is Bertha about?

INT. THE PINK HOUSE NIGHT

The butler bows, casting his eyes sidelong at Dacey. Bertha, a black woman in an apron, bustles forth from the cellar kitchen.

JOSEPH HABERSHAM

Bertha, this is Dacey. She will serve at table. Show her to the garret.

Bertha gives Dacey a critical look.

BERTHA

Yes, Mister Habersham.

Dacey drops a curtsey.

DACEY

Thank you, kind sir. I will serve you well.

BERTHA

Come along, child.

Bertha leads the way upstairs with a candle. Dacey follows her up the curving staircase, two flights to the attic. Bertha shows her to a small room with a narrow bed and nightstand, and lights a chamber-candle. Bertha opens a window and a cross-breeze flutters the candle flames. Dacey sits down on the bed and sighs with weariness. Bertha returns with a basin and ewer of warm water, soap and a linen towel, and a cotton nightrail.

INT. THE PINK HOUSE DECEMBER 1774 NIGHT

The family celebrates the twentieth birthday of youngest son John. James Habersham Senior presides at a round table set for eight, near the fireplace in the vast dining room with its tall windows. As flames consume logs, a political discussion consumes his three sons and two old friends, Reverend George Whitefield and planter Jonathan Bryan, along with young attorney George Walton. Dacey serves the crab soup, pouring on cream and sauterne from small pitchers. She stands by with her hands clasped behind her. James Junior takes a loaf of bread and breaks it up for his father.

JAMES SENIOR

Thank you, Jemme.

(to Jonathan) I hate what is generally understood by politics, but I think I have a proper idea of what is called prudence.

James Junior is thirty. Joseph, the middle son, is in his twenties. His eyes take in everything, but his firm mouth divulges nothing. John, the youngest, plays the fool.

JOHN

I am thrilled with the new pianoforte. All my wishes are granted, with the music sheets you brought from London. Thank you, Uncle George.

In the far parlor, a linnet sings in a cage.

REVEREND WHITEFIELD

(with a beneficent smile) Ah yes, the linnet.

JONATHAN BRYAN

My coachman has been preaching to the other Negroes. I gave him a barn to use for a church.

REVEREND WHITEFIELD

(pontificates) I don't know if that's a good idea. It might cause him to become impudent.

Bryan's eyes flash, but he maintains a cordial tone.

JONATHAN BRYAN

Andrew is an eloquent speaker and much loved.

JAMES SENIOR

The souls of my poor, benighted blacks lie heavy on my heart. There are one hundred and ninety eight persons in my black family. I had a David who preached at Bethesda, saying God would send deliverance to the Negroes from the power of their masters, as He freed the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage. I had to put him on a ship to get him away, or he would have been hanged.

Dacey serves Cornish game hens and roast capon.

JAMES JUNIOR

What sort of bird is this?

JOHN

Passenger pigeon. I shot a brace of them at Brampton.

REVEREND WHITEFIELD

Well done. A pestiferous bird.

JAMES JUNIOR

Have you been to the orphan house lately, Uncle George?

REVEREND WHITEFIELD

(nods) As you know, Bethesda was damaged in a fire. I saw the Countess on my visit to England, and she was so generous, she sold her jewelry to repair the damage.

Whitefield turns to Jonathan Bryan.

And you have been another generous friend of the orphanage.

JONATHAN BRYAN

My pleasure, Reverend.

James Senior clears his throat.

JAMES SENIOR

I received a most gracious letter from her Ladyship. I wrote her that I do miss England, and I should like to go back there.

JOHN

What, Father? Without us?

JAMES SENIOR

(loftily) With you or without you.

John reels back and makes a comical face, as if aghast. Everyone laughs, because James is too fond of his sons to ever part from them. Seeing George Walton gaze sadly at the family group, John smiles at him.

JOHN

I congratulate you on passing the bar, George. Surely that was a lot of reading.

GEORGE WALTON

(smiles) I love to read. When I was a boy, my uncle thought books an idleness. He wouldn't even give me a candle.

JAMES SENIOR

You're welcome to any book in my library, young Master Walton.

GEORGE WALTON

(distant) Thank you, kind sir.

JOSEPH HABERSHAM

I saw in the *Gazette* that a shipment of tea was dumped in Boston Harbor, by patriots dressed as Mohawks.

Dacey pays attention. If Boston defied the British taxes, part of her thrills to hear it.

JAMES SENIOR

(in measured tones) The people on this Continent are generally almost in a state of madness and desperation. I fear an open rebellion against the parent state and consequently amongst ourselves.

JOSEPH

Hear hear!

Joseph raises his glass to toast the rebellion. George Walton follows suit, but Joseph's father demurs.

JAMES SENIOR

Joe, you involve yourself in political disputes, contrary to my wish and advice.

He eyes Walton, who lowers his glass.

JONATHAN BRYAN

We wouldn't accept the Stamp Act, so Parliament passed the Townshend Act.

Feeling her nose tickle, Dacey fights the urge to scratch.

JAMES SENIOR

(blusters) I pleaded against the Stamp Act. I think the Townshend Act a wrong measure, and will lay the foundation of perhaps a serious breach, which had better have been avoided, but as you say, I have no concern in it, and indeed I have not.

He beckons for more wine, and Dacey fills his glass. She clears the dishes and serves the roast baron of beef, pouring red wine into crystal goblets.

JOHN

What would you like, Uncle George?

REVEREND WHITEFIELD

It's your birthday, you choose for me, dear Johnny.

John serves him the crisp end of the roast with Yorkshire pudding and gravy, then serves himself. Joseph takes a rare piece. Dacey brings the cake and a sword for John to cut it. He has imbibed too much wine and cuts with gusto, almost injuring George Walton across from him. This causes a laugh from Joseph. James Senior eyes his middle son. Dacey lights the plum pudding aflame.

JOSEPH

(to his father) You became concerned in it when you were acting governor and dissolved the assembly--

JAMES SENIOR

(nettled, speaks over him) I dissolved the Assembly because they elected Mister Noble Wimberly Jones their speaker after I refused him. I had it in command from His Majesty to negative the person. They reelected him twice and each time I refused, and then they elected Archibald Bulloch, but they wrote it in the minutes and would not rescind the Minute.

He glowers at his middle son, who grins at him. George Walton shrinks in his chair. Jonathan Bryan meets Joseph's eye and clamps his lips with his fingers. Fanning smoke from the pudding, Dacey turns her head and sneezes with a high note. The linnet bursts into song. A carriage is heard stopping outside.

Sound: JINGLE OF HARNESS. The butler looks outside.

HENRY

It's the royal Governor's coach.

Taking his hat and cloak, the butler admits James Wright.

(announces) His Excellency the Governor, Sir James Wright, baronet.

James Wright walks elegantly across the dining room, scanning the guests with hooded, aristocratic eyes.

JAMES SENIOR

Sir James, so nice to see you. Join us, join us.

He rises partially on his gouty legs to greet Wright, and sinks back down with a grunt of pain.

JAMES WRIGHT

No, don't get up. I've already eaten.

Arching an eyebrow, he smiles at James and his sons, but avoids Reverend Whitefield as if he owes him money. Jonathan Bryan and George Walton are beneath his notice.

I came to wish John a happy birthday and bring him a gift.

He hands John a parcel which reveals a pair of kid gloves.

JOHN

I thank you, Governor. They will keep my hands warm this chill winter. Have you seen our new instrument?

John pushes back his chair and walks into the front parlor, where the pianoforte takes pride of place.

INT. FRONT PARLOR NIGHT

The case of fine parquet holds a keyboard of six octaves. John strikes a chord and dashes out a merry tune, singing "Over the hills and far away."

JOHN

(singing) Over the hills and a great way off, the wind shall blow my top-knot off.

Wright picks up a violin and joins in. James Senior staggers into the room, leaning on his cane and the butler. James Junior and Uncle George gather around. Jonathan Bryan, George Walton and Joseph cluster in the doorway.

JONATHAN BRYAN

(confides sotto voce) Wright dismissed me from the Council.

JOSEPH

(nods) Our views do not agree.

Everyone bellows the chorus. Soon good humor is restored. Bertha serves a tray of cordials and the men settle into armchairs. Dacey joins in singing from the dining room, where she is clearing away. Hearing her alto, John calls to her.

JOHN

Dacey, leave the dishes and sing with us.

They make merry until, on the last verse, Joseph sings a rebel version.

JOSEPH

(loudly) Though kings and tyrants come and go, a soldier's life is all I know. I'll live to fight another day, Over the hills and far away.

Sir James Wright stops playing. The violin hangs in one hand, the bow in the other. He looks to the heavens.

JAMES WRIGHT

(mildly) Well, I never!

James Senior frowns at Joseph. Joseph walks to the door, where the butler rushes with his tricorn and cane.

JAMES SENIOR

God Save our mother country.

He raises a glass of brandy.

ALL EXCEPT JOSEPH

God save England.

Joseph walks out into the chill night.

JAMES WRIGHT

(to James Senior) Thank you for dissolving the Assembly while I was in England. Exactly what I would have done.

JAMES SENIOR

As your acting governor, I could do no less.

JAMES WRIGHT

I knew I could count on you. Now the Creeks, a nation of savages, have killed and massacred some of our inhabitants without the least provocation, and we have not one of the King's troops to protect the country.

JONATHAN BRYAN

I know the sachem of the Creeks. I will talk to him and find out their grievance.

James Wright stares at Jon Bryan as if amazed by his effrontery.

JAMES SENIOR

Thank you, Jon. Sir James, we are fortunate to have an Indian expert among us. Let us seek a peace treaty.

Wright looks aside, out the window where his coach waits.

JAMES WRIGHT

We have treated with the Creeks before. Do you think another meeting would be productive?

JONATHAN BRYAN

I will speak to them.

JOHN

I'll go with you.

His hands sketch out sign language. James Senior looks troubled, as if he fears for John's safety. Wright nods.

JAMES WRIGHT

And so, I wish you all a happy Christmas and good evening.

He takes his hat and cloak from the butler and departs.

In the dining room a bell rings from the kitchen.

BERTHA

(bellows off screen) Dacey, come down here and wash the dishes!

INT. CELLAR NIGHT

In the cellar, Dacey stands over large wash tubs, scraping plates into a garbage pail and scrubbing pots with broom corn.

DACEY

Dishes, dishes! I'm tired of playing with garbage.

Taking off her apron, and tucking a lace fichu into her bodice, she pulls on flat, buckled shoes, saving her pumps with high heels. Evading Bertha, she slips out a side door.

EXT. SAVANNAH RIVERFRONT NIGHT

Dacey traipses along over the cobblestones, recalling days with her father on Galway Bay, handling sails and tiller of the fishing boat. Flashback, young Dacey plays Grace O'Malley, pirate.

VOICEOVER (Dacey's father)

*Legend has it that when Grace met with Elizabeth, the Queen granted all her wishes, and she had five castles, and sailed the Irish Sea until she was very old.*

A fresh breeze beckons Dacey toward Factors Walk, where she can see masts and spars of ships below the warehouses. The pink light of dusk lies across the sky. Out of breath, Bertha catches up with her.

BERTHA

What do you think you're doing, "Miss" Dacey? Get back to your duties, missy.

EXT. SAVANNAH MAY 1775 DAY

Months have passed and Dacey has grown prosperous in her place with the Habershams. Azaleas are in bloom and Dacey blooms with health and youthful beauty. She sees Mordecai Sheftall striding down the street with his nephew Sheftall Sheftall. Mordecai has a yarmulke pulled over his balding pate. A pillar of the community, he is dressed like a gentlemen on his way to temple, yet he hurries along in unseemly haste.

John Mulryne jokes with a crab-seller on Broughton Street who carries a basket on her head. A smile lights his features, still attractive in old age.

JOHN MULRYNE

I can't understand a word. What are you crying?

CRAB-SELLER

Buyer, crabs, fresh crabs!

JOHN MULRYNE

Let me see them then!

She takes the basket off her head, and Dacey sidles past them. Arriving at the corner of Whittaker Street, she sees a crowd at Tondee's Tavern and recognizes some of the men being admitted by Peter Tondee. They are Liberty Boys, rebellious colonials who plan to make war on England. The Swiss innkeeper acts as doorman. Tondee stands aside to let the Sheftalls into the vestibule. Standing on tiptoe, Dacey glances past the greying blond hair of Tondee. The Swiss bars her way.

TONDEE

(German accent) On your vay, Miss.

She withdraws, but when his back is turned, she slips past him into a taproom on the right.

INT. TAPROOM DAY

Rows of pewter mugs hang from the ceiling beams. Tories and Rebels fill the room. They look alike, dress alike and speak like Englishmen. Despite Tondee's efforts, Tories intermingle in the crowd. They make no effort to hide their allegiance, but boast of it proudly. Peeking into the vestibule, she sees the Sheftalls hurry down the hallway, and she follows them through two more rooms and down some steps.

INT. PRIVATE DINING ROOM DAY

Mistress Tondee admits the rebels into a private dining room. Men sit in settles flanking a fireplace, and in spindle chairs at a long table. When a stranger approaches, fierce Mistress Tondee stands in the way, but she looks Dacey in the eyes and lets her in.

LYMAN HALL

The Battle of Lexington has proven their intent to crush our resistance. Resolved, we will send delegates to the Second Continental Congress.

NOBEL WIMBERLY JONES

Second the motion!

ARCHIBALD BULLOCH

All agreed, say Aye.

The men roar their assent.

MEN

(in unison) Aye!

ARCHIBALD BULLOCH

The ayes have it.

NOBEL WIMBERLY JONES

Move to establish a Patriot government in Georgia.

His daring galvanizes the men. They look at each other with an excited surmise.

ARCHIBALD BULLOCH

Second the motion. All in favor.

MEN

Aye!

JOHN HOUSTOUN

It is unanimous. The motion is carried. We constitute a Provincial Congress.

He records the vote on parchment with a quill pen.

MORDECAI SHEFTALL

Move that Archibald Bulloch act as our president. Do I hear a second?

LYMAN HALL

Second the motion.

MORDECAI

All in favor.

MEN

Aye!

George Walton looks up from reading *The Savannah Georgia Gazette*.

GEORGE WALTON

They've blockaded Boston. Closed the port to shipping.

JOHN HOUSTOUN

We have to help them. What can we send?

Waits with pen poised.

ARCHIBALD BULLOCH

Rice.

LYMAN HALL

Money.

A deep voice in the crowd is heard.

JOSEPH HABERSHAM

The North is crying for gunpowder!

Dacey sees Joseph across the room and makes her way toward him.

HOUSTOUN

Who will deliver?

JOSEPH

We will.

He stands near the window with a man whose sun-tanned face gives him the air of a sailor. With dark hair pulled back in a club, high collar and cravat, blue jacket faced with gold, and buff breeches tucked into black boots, he smiles at Dacey with friendly eyes.

OLIVER BOWEN

(New England inflection) Who's this pretty girl?

JOSEPH

My servant, Dacey.

She curtsies.

OLIVER BOWEN

And I am your very humble and most obedient--

He takes her hand to kiss it. She pulls back and he holds on and kisses her fingers. The heat of his lips sends a jolt through her.

Ship's master Oliver Bowen.

Dacey looks from Joseph to Oliver as if the scales are falling from her eyes. She is smitten with the fine features of the sea captain.

VOICEOVER (Dacey)

*Oh, my fickle soul!* *How ungrateful must I be, to the savior of my freedom, just because a man is handsome and charming.*

DACEY

Why is everyone here?

JOSEPH

Parliament passed the Boston Port Act. Soldiers have occupied Boston.

More resolutions are offered and passed, and another meeting is scheduled a week hence. The Liberty Boys assume a convivial air. One plays a penny whistle, another strikes up an ode to "Good Ale."

MEN

(sing) It's up she goes and down she goes.

To all appearances, they are having a rollicking good time. They disperse.

INT. TAPROOM DAY

The rebels are walking past the taproom when John Mulryne looks out and scoffs.

MULRYNE

Another secret meeting!

Standing at the bar, Thomas Brown lifts a glass of rum.

THOMAS BROWN

(shouts) I give to you our sovereign and protector!

Several Tories raise their glasses and pewter mugs.

George the Third, in his most august Title, King of a Free People.

TORIES

Hear hear!

They up-end their drinks. Oliver Bowen and several other Liberty Boys storm up to the bar. They demand ale and rain farthings on the counter. Raising his mug, Bowen holds forth in a deep, booming voice.

OLIVER BOWEN

To those who would rather die than submit to the iron yoke of slavery!

Houstoun, Hall, Walton, young Sheftall and Bulloch clink mugs. Joseph pushes closer to his friend, while Dacey waits in the doorway with Mordecai Sheftall. The older man watches with an amused gleam in his eye.

MULRYNE

(drawls) Hello, the rover from Rogue Island. What news from Yankee Doodledom?

His cronies laugh.

THOMAS BROWN

(jokes) Our rebels have taken and soundly defeated several kegs.

OLIVER BOWEN

(roars) I'll pound you up so bad, your mother won't know you! I'll bust your haslet out!

Brown reels and Mulryne grips his sword pommel.

MULRYNE

You young upstart. What in the world is a haslet?

Bowen gives a harsh laugh.

OLIVER BOWEN

Ha! You'll find out.

Joseph pulls Oliver aside.

JOSEPH HABERSHAM

Back out. Take the longboat and go ashore!

Oliver lets his friends haul him out of the taproom.

INT. VESTIBULE OF THE TAVERN DAY

The rebels clap Oliver Bowen on the back.

EXT. STREET DAY

Dacey follows Oliver and Joseph across the street. Joseph is laughing.

JOSEPH

May Liberty never want for a Bowen and Bowen never want for Liberty.

OLIVER

Same to you, Habersham.

DACEY

(smiles) That was the liveliest meeting I have seen all year.

JOSEPH

You heard our plans?

DACEY

I will never betray you.

JOSEPH

Why don't you go on home?

DACEY

Home to Ireland! If you let me sail with you, and put me on a British ship, so that I may go to England--

OLIVER

(retorts) Not likely!

They have arrived at the ballast stones of River Street, large cobblestones that trip the unwary. Joseph offers Dacey his arm and so does Oliver. She places a hand on each and linking with both of them, proceeds at a swinging pace.

DACEY

(to Oliver) Don't you ever sail there?

Amused by her naivete, he laughs and Joseph joins in.

OLIVER

(brash) The only way we'll go to England is in chains, to be hanged as traitors.

Dacey hugs his arm.

DACEY

What turned you against England?

OLIVER

The *Gaspee,* a British sloop of war, would board and rob our Newport ships. He was chasing a packet and ran aground.

His eyelids crinkle and he smiles.

My younger brother led the raid. They burned the vessel. No one was killed. They put the crew ashore.

JOSEPH

(exclaims) What decided it for me were the Intolerable Acts of Parliament. Every time they want money, they tax America. Every man in England thinks he is our sovereign.

They walk down River Street to the docks. As they stride along in the warmth of an early May evening, Oliver doffs his jacket and again offers Dacey his arm.

OLIVER

Here's a ship bound for England. *The Jerusalem,* merchant.

JOSEPH

(sardonic) Are you sure you want to go, Dacey? I hold no prisoners.

He drops her arm and she drops Oliver's and stands facing Joseph, tearful at the thought of leaving her new home. She doesn't want to part from him. She impulsively clutches his arm and hugs it to her side.

DACEY

No, Mister Habersham. I will remain here with you.

A smile lights his face. Oliver marks their closeness with a flash of his eyes.

OLIVER

Would you like to see our ship?

He challenges her with a merry invitation.

DACEY

Yes. I'd like to sail her.

OLIVER

(delighted) Can you sail a schooner?

He points out a topsail schooner, rigged fore and aft. Dacey sees the ensign lifting in the breeze: on a white field with a red border, red block letters. She can't read.

DACEY

What do you call her?

OLIVER

American Liberty. (in a voice of command) Ahoy, Salty! Wake up, you sojer.

A crewman starts up from where he was dozing on a bench along the gunwale. He ships the gangplank so they can board.

EXT. ABOARD THE SCHOONER EVENING

Captain Bowen introduces Dacey to the mate.

OLIVER

First mate Saltero, the old skinflint. He'll get work out of you.

SALTY

(Italian accent) I'm-a no skinflint. I just like a bargain.

His shirt is threadbare and his skin leathery, but he has a warm smile.

OLIVER

Here Dacey, flemish the line.

He is amused to see her reach for a bowline. She coils it neatly in a flat spiral on the deck.

Two stout masts ringed with hoops carry sail, furled and lashed to spars. A barefoot crew in canvas breeches and linen shirts lazes around in the dog watch. First mate Saltero takes Bowen and Habersham aside. As they stand with their heads together, Dacey goes below.

INT. BELOW DECKS EVENING

Dacey rushes down the companionway and finds herself alone. Light filters through deck prisms of blue glass, showing a galley on the starboard side fitted out with a stove, dish cupboard, and water jug suspended over a basin stand. A wardroom on the port side holds a chart table. Built in on both sides are a curtained bunk for the captain, across from one for the mate, and four open bunks stacked upper and lower for the idlers: cook, carpenter, doctor and sail-maker. In the forecastle, hammocks hang triced up. From a sea chest, she pulls out clothes to disguise herself so she won't be put ashore.

Voices on deck.

SALTY

All hands!

Sound: THUDS of men's bare feet.

OLIVER

Dacey!

Dacey looks for a place to hide. A square underfoot with a flat ring yields a hatch to the hold, and she drops down.

INT. HOLD EVENING

Lying on a crate, Dacey lets the hatch-cover down and lies in the dark. Sounds of bilge water slapping and the hull creaking. Footfalls and boots thud overhead.

Voice above.

OLIVER

Where is that girl? Dacey!

He mutters a curse and the boots run up the stair-treads.

INT. BELOW DECKS EVENING

The light changes as the ship is moving. As the vessel gains speed, the hatch-cover rises a few inches. Seeing nobody below, Dacey pushes the cover up and climbs out. In the slops chest, she finds a shirt, weskit and breeches. Shedding her frock and petticoats, she shoves them into a bunk. She ties back her hair with a ribbon, and joins the men topside.

EXT. ON DECK EVENING

The men heave on the lines to raise sail. Captain Bowen stands at the binnacle next to the mate.

OLIVER

Where is that girl?

With three sails set, Dacey comes aft and greets the captain with a tug of her forelock.

DACEY

Seaman Derry Flynn reporting for duty, sir!

She stands straight, arms in a brace with one hand clasping her elbow behind her back. Her toes are turned out, the better to balance and sway with the ship.

The captain looks twice.

OLIVER

Salty, do we have a new sailor?

SALTY

Looks that way, sir.

Dacey pleads in a quiet voice.

DACEY

Don't give me away.

(aloud) Willing and able, sir!

OLIVER

We have no time for playacting. We're sailing to Tybee.

DACEY

My place is at your side.

OLIVER

No, your place is...in the starboard watch.

DACEY

Aye, captain!

She fairly dances to the starboard side, and hangs on as wind fills the sails and the ship heels over. They trim sail to catch the off-shore breeze, and run down the ebb tide on the Savannah River. The wind in her hair, Dacey's soul floats free as the land glides away. The banks are heavily forested. A strong current bears them downriver. At a bend in the river, Hutchinson Island ends. The river widens out. Two dolphins roll in the water and a baby dolphin leaps. Brown pelicans fly overhead.

They cruise to Tybee Roads, make a circuit, and return to Savannah on the high tide.

INT. TONDEE'S TAVERN LONG ROOM DAY

Archibald Bulloch chairs the meeting. John Houstoun takes notes with a quill pen.

ARCHIBALD BULLOCH

The Provincial Congress of Georgia will come to order. The first item of business is to appoint an executive council. (reads) Oliver Bowen, Joseph Habersham, James Jackson, Noble Wimberly Jones... We will entertain a motion to liberate the King's stores.

OLIVER

(to Joseph) We need guns. Ship's cannon and swivels.

JOSEPH

Move that we raid the royal armory.

JAMES JACKSON

(shouts) Second!

BULLOCH

All in favor say Aye.

MEN

Aye!

BULLOCH

The ayes have it!

EXT. THE MILITARY FILATURE NIGHT

As night falls, the men of the Executive Council surround the armory at Abercorn and St. Julian. Breaking the door down, they roll out cannons, gun-carriages and kegs of powder totaling 600 pounds. Each takes several kegs and hands them out to be hidden away.

EXT. RIVER STREET NIGHT

Loading horse-carts, they bring the cannons and gun carriages down to the dock and sway them aboard the schooner. The men stow gunpowder kegs below decks.

JOSEPH

We'll ship this north to Cambridge for the Rebel army.

OLIVER

That will bring us up to strength.

INT. THE PINK HOUSE NIGHT

James Habersham Senior peers at Joseph over a candle. Sitting in the front parlor in an armchair next to a side table, he holds a folded letter with the seal broken.

JAMES SENIOR

Joe, it's about time. Out at all hours keeping company with ruffians. I wish your conduct may be proper and wise, and nothing appear that may be deemed capricious.

JOSEPH

(smiles) Good evening, Papa.

JAMES SENIOR

How does it look for my son to associate with a pirate?

JOSEPH

(protests) If you are referring to Captain Bowen, I dispute that he is a pirate.

JAMES SENIOR

Did he not lead the *Gaspee* raid?

JOSEPH

No, he was at sea, and docked at Savannah the next day.

JAMES SENIOR

Oh, I cannot abide this heat. I shall take a voyage north.

James fans his face.

And how do you explain this letter I received from Isabella Rae?

Setting the candle on a table, he puts on his spectacles and unfolds the parchment. Peeking in from the dining room, Dacey hears him and looks shaken. James unfolds the letter and holds it out to Joseph, who reads it.

JAMES SENIOR

Isabella is coming here.

Joseph exchanges a glance with Dacey. She looks panic-stricken.

JAMES SENIOR

Look, enclosed is a runaway notice for Dacey Flynn. She must return to Rae's Hall.

JOSEPH

(to Dacey) Prepare for a visit.

EXT. TONDEE'S TAVERN DAY

Oliver Bowen and his crew are raising a stout flag-pole.

OLIVER BOWEN

Step the mast!

BOSUN

Heave!

The mariners straighten the pole and secure it with heavy rocks and dirt. Archibald Bulloch hoists the Liberty flag. "Join or Die" proclaims the banner, a segmented snake with initials for the colonies. Passing on the street, Thomas Brown mocks them, scoffing as the Union flag ascends the pole. Oliver gives him a long, hard look.

OLIVER

I mark your insolence.

ARCHIBALD BULLOCH

With this flag we celebrate the birth of Liberty.

Two cannon fire a salute.

EXT. RIVER STREET DAY

Oliver and Joseph walk to the dock. Wharf rats flee their approach.

JOSEPH

The British have a shipment of gunpowder coming by sea. It's meant for the Indians, but we will intercept.

OLIVER

Carolina barges have moored at Bloody Point, across from the lighthouse. They'll intercept any vessel entering the Savannah River. We'll find the powder vessel, and when we do...

He kicks a paving stone.

(gruffly) May I call upon Dacey?

JOSEPH

Yes, she can do as she pleases while she is under my roof. But Isabella Rae owns her indenture, and she wants her back at Rae's Hall.

OLIVER

No! (points upriver) Isn't that plantation miles away?

JOSEPH

(nods) Leave it to me. I know how to handle Isabella. You see, she is my fiancee.

OLIVER

Your fiancee?

JOSEPH

(smug) Betrothed when we were children. She's coming to see me tomorrow, and I will exert my influence to set Dacey free.

OLIVER

I'm beholden to you. If there's anything I can do, money or...

JOSEPH

(holds up his hand, confident) Leave it to me.

EXT. THE BLUFF OVER SAVANNAH HARBOR EVENING

Naked to the waist, pouring sweat, their faces blackened with soot, the Liberty Boys spike the 21 cannon facing the Bay, lift them off their mountings and roll them down the bluff to splash into the river.

JOSEPH

(laughs) When Wright comes to fire salutes for the King's birthday, can you imagine the look on his face?

Oliver throws back his head and laughs uproariously.

OLIVER

This is how we celebrate.

Raucous chortles, titters and giggles ring out in the night.

BOSUN

Here's to you, Georgie Porgie!

OLIVER

Three times three!

JOSEPH

Shh! Someone's coming.

GEORGE WALTON

It's only me.

Oliver and his crew, Joseph and George finish dismantling the gun battery in a charged silence. Oliver works with a will, smiling to himself.

VOICEOVER (Oliver)

*Such a girl is my Dacey. An Irish colleen, with her eyes that sparkle with mischief, and red lips that beg to be kissed. God help me, I'm in love like never before. Her hair curling in tendrils, smells like a rose. Oh, I'm done for.*

CREW

Gangway!

They heave the last cannon down the slope. Oliver jumps out of the way.

VOICEOVER (Oliver)

*She went below and came back dressed as a boy. And a fine figure of a woman, too. And she knows seafaring. What a treasure! No matter that she's only a servant. I can elevate her position. I've got us married and I hardly know her. So besotted.*

Running down to the Strand, one man works the pump as they splash in a stone trough. They wash off the soot, then go their separate ways.

INT. THE PINK HOUSE PARLOR EVENING

Joseph Habersham sits dressed in a linen shirt, cravat and waistcoat. He has left off his jacket in the June heat. Bertha serves tea in the upstairs parlor. Isabella Rae sits by the window, her silk gown arranged over a chair, her dainty shoes pointed at Joseph.

ISABELLA

(in a soft Georgia drawl) But my dear Joseph, I must have her back. She's my dressmaker, and she does fine work, like the frock she stole when she ran away.

Isabella's lustrous, thick hair is done up, and two spiral curls dangle by her cheek. She swings her head to look at Dacey, who stands awkwardly in the corner with her clothes in a ditty bag.

ISABELLA

We wear the same size.

Joseph seems smitten with the charming young heiress.

JOSEPH

Let me purchase her indenture.

ISABELLA

(laughs) Do you plan to open a dress-shop?

JOSEPH

Dacey serves at table and we find need of her.

ISABELLA

I'm sorry, Joseph, her papers are not for sale. Now if I may redeem my property.

JOSEPH

I heard you hitched her to a plow.

Isabella smiles, blushing.

ISABELLA

I didn't expect her to pull it! She was so mad, she plowed a whole acre!

He tries to stifle a guffaw but bursts out laughing.

JOSEPH

Seriously, Belle. You won't punish her?

ISABELLA

No, only by adding three years to her indenture.

Dacey looks stricken. Blinking back tears, she picks up her bundle and braces herself to follow her mistress.

JOSEPH

The least I can do after our grievous mistake is to invite you and Colonel Mulryne to stay for dinner.

ISABELLA

Why, that's very kind of you, Joseph. I hear your cook is the best in Savannah.

She takes out a lace handkerchief and dabs at a spot behind his ear.

(sweetly) Were you helping her sweep out the oven when you got soot on you?

He grasps her hand.

JOSEPH

Thank you, Belle. If Colonel Mulryne continues to court you, I'll be jealous.

His bantering tone sounds flirtatious. The lovely looks of Isabella are having an effect on the man Dacey trusts as a dear friend.

ISABELLA

(laughs) I don't care anything for Mulryne. He's old enough to be my father. He happened to call on us this morning and said he was coming into town. Bertha, tell Colonel Mulryne he may go.

Bertha curtsies and leaves. Isabella turns to admire a portrait of James Habersham Junior in his slimmer days. Joseph catches Dacey's eye. With a roll of his eyes and a toss of his head, he signals her to be gone. She withdraws.

INT. UPSTAIRS EVENING

Desperate, Dacey seeks a hiding place and comes upon John's bed chamber. His room overflows with sumptuous clothing, wigs and hats on stands. She searches the armoire and takes stockings, a shirt and breeches. Changing clothes, she pushes her gown into the ditty bag. She helps herself to a neckerchief and extra shirt. She grabs a silk waistcoat and buttons it over the shirt. Tying back her hair with a ribbon, she claps on a tricorn hat. Her old shoes are well broken-in. They carry her down the stairs and away.

EXT. RIVER STREET EVENING

Dacey strides at a good pace to the docks and finds the *American Liberty.*

DACEY

(in a low voice) Ahoy, Salty. Permission to come aboard.

She waits with her ditty bag over her shoulder.

SALTY

Why, young John, is it?

The mate pushes out the gangplank and she steps on deck.

DACEY

No, it's Dacey!

Salty looks at her legs, then her eyes.

SALTY

Miss Dacey! Are you looking for a berth?

DACEY

(with a wry smile) Yes. I want to be one of the Liberty Boys.

EXT. ABOARD THE AMERICAN LIBERTY DAY

Dacey stands watch on the schooner of 185 tons. Its deck is 100 feet long with five carriage guns roped to the gunports along each gunwale, a culverin on the bow and a stern-chaser aft. Roll call brings the crew together with the captain. First mate Saltero calls out each name and post.

SALTY

Smeaton, second mate.

SMEATON

Sir!

SALTY

Flaherty, quartermaster.

FLAHERTY

Sir!

He goes down the row. As Salty calls the names of doctor Jones, carpenter Martin, cook Pompei, boatswain Wiggins, sail-maker Yeats, gunners Driscoll and Jessup, and deck-hands Henry and Long, each sailor answers, "Sir!"

SALTY

Able seaman Derry Flynn!

DACEY

Sir!

Captain Bowen cocks his head and suppresses a smile. He doesn't reveal that he knows her in front of the men.

SALTY

(aside to Oliver) We're short of crew and he comes cheap. (mutters) I can bunk with the idlers.

POMPEI

And I will swing a hammock in the forecastle.

Salty divides the fifty men into watches and sets them about their tasks. The captain seeks Dacey out.

OLIVER

Seaman Derry Flynn, I would confer with you in the wardroom.

INT. BELOW DECKS IN THE WARDROOM DAY

They step over the weatherboard and Oliver pulls the door closed.

OLIVER

What yarn have you cooked up with Mister Saltero?

DACEY

I've come aboard as an apprentice.

OLIVER

Do you know sailing?

DACEY

I can make the beds, do the washing, keep the cabin lamps and brasswork clean, trim the sidelights, heave the lead, and sing out the soundings.

His eyes survey her in breeches and weskit as he nods, considering.

OLIVER

Can you go aloft? Out on the jib-boom?

DACEY

Aye, Captain!

OLIVER

Can you cook?

DACEY

Aye, Captain. Sea pie, stew and duff.

OLIVER

(nods) You have been to sea. But ah, Derry, let me know the next time you plan to transform yourself. I don't want to lose my Dacey altogether.

She pauses on her way out, and looks up at him from beneath her eyelashes.

DACEY

Your Dacey?

OLIVER

Whose Dacey are you, Habersham's?

DACEY

No. I hold him in high regard. He's like a brother to me.

OLIVER

It's perilous at sea, and I don't want to lose you. I know you plan to go back to Ireland.

DACEY

Not while I'm needed here. I wish to serve you.

He gives her a satisfied smile.

OLIVER

Be ready at four bells. We sail on the tide.

EXT. ON DECK DAY

Gunner Driscoll idles away, splicing a line. He strikes Dacey with a rope's end, making her jump. She suppresses a yelp, and glares at him.

DRISCOLL

What are you playing at? You're no seaman.

Tears in her eyes, she looks defiant.

DACEY

If I've failed in my duties...

DRISCOLL

It's not your ability I question, it's your dainty ways.

He dusts her trousers with the rope's end. Captain Bowen stays his hand and takes the rope away. He calls down to the quartermaster.

OLIVER

Grog ration all around.

Dacey holds out a mug and sees a cup of rum poured in from a dipper, followed by a dipper of water. Her eyes widen. Looking around at her shipmates, she sips a mouthful of the burning liquid. Gunner Driscoll eyes her satirically.

DRISCOLL

Rum not to your liking, Seaman Derry?

DACEY

I'm thirsty for some sweet water.

Plunging the dipper into the scuttlebutt, she dilutes her rum into four-water grog. Driscoll shakes his head, and the men exchange glances like they think that odd, but Dacey finds herself steadier if she waters the rum.

OLIVER

(to Dacey) Go aloft. Relieve the look-out.

She climbs lightly up the ratlines and balances on a spar. Clinging with bare feet, she sways like a dancer. Captain Bowen gazes up at her graceful figure for a moment and tears his eyes away.

DRISCOLL

(under his breath) That's no seaman. What a gribble.

The mate strikes the bell.

OLIVER

Seaman Derry, tar down the fore and aft stays.

DACEY

Aye, sir.

She swings down the ratlines and picks up the hot tar-pot, stirring with the brush.

OLIVER

Salty, rig a bowline bight.

Dacey sits in a loop of rope as she rides up with her tar bucket, then rides down the forestay to the jibboom. The billethead on the prow is carved in a scroll. Tar-pot in one hand, she tars with the other and paints the stays. As the ship rises and ducks, she keeps her balance and doesn't spill a drop. Oliver Bowen takes note of her courage and also her trim figure.

OLIVER

(mutters) By the holy poker! (to Salty) Haul her aboard.

As Dacey hands Salty the tar-pot, she manages to spill some on gunner Driscoll's shirt. He shakes his fist at her.

OLIVER

Driscoll, tar the aft stays.

Driscoll walks away with the tar-pot. Oliver smiles, closing his eyes.

INT. BELOW DECKS NIGHT

In the first mate's bunk with curtain drawn, Dacey slips out of her breeches. Wearing only a long damask shirt, she washes herself with soap and a wrung-out scrap of linen, and dives under a blanket. Oliver Bowen pulls the curtain back and sits beside her. Lying down full length, he stretches out on his side, his shirt open.

OLIVER

(whispers) Good evening, my dear. I need to speak to you privately.

DACEY

(whispers) Captain Bowen, if you please!

His arm around her waist, he lies quietly sweeping her face with his eyes, fathoms dark in the shadows.

OLIVER

(softly) Forgive me if I singled you out. I mean to show the men you are a true sailor. I shall protect you. I shall keep your secret.

DACEY

Is this how you keep my secret? Why did you come to me?

OLIVER

Why does a bee come to a flower?

He tastes her lips, prodding with his tongue. He breathes in the scent of her hair, and crushes his lips to hers. In the heat of passion, she responds in kind.

DACEY

What I feel for you I've never felt before, but we can never be together.

OLIVER

Then you do not know me. Once I make up my mind, nothing can sway me.

A wave rolls the ship and throws them together.

DACEY

Leave me be.

Dacey struggles to resist, though her body is saying the opposite, pressing against him.

Would you make a harlot of me?

He stops and pulls back, controlling his passion.

OLIVER

I thank God who sent you, Dacey. You make me feel young and silly, if anyone can, for normally I am as sober as Job.

DACEY

Get out of here.

OLIVER

(hoarse) What gentleman could resist such an invitation? (jumping out) Then I bid you good evening, Seaman Derry.

Ascertaining that they are unobserved, Dacey snatches the curtain shut.

EXT. ABOARD THE AMERICAN LIBERTY DAY

Dacey goes from the stern to the forepeak, cleaning, tidying, and stowing the gear. She gathers towels off the spars where they have been drying, and folds them. From the helm, Oliver Bowen looks up and gives her a knowing smile.

OLIVER

I love a schooner. Gaff sails keep it close to the wind. Better for coasting. Seaman Derry, stow the small stores.

DACEY

Aye, Captain.

Dacey gathers up packages of coffee, sugar and biscuits and goes below.

INT. WARDROOM OF THE SCHOONER DAY

Joseph Habersham and Oliver Bowen meet in the wardroom and unroll a chart.

OLIVER

Was Isabella much surprised to find her servant skipped?

JOSEPH

Surprised and you might say, annoyed. And my father called you a Gaspee raider.

OLIVER

Ephraim was the Gaspee raider. Now I finally have a chance to top my brother.

JOSEPH

I'm often outshone by my younger brother. John proves to be a fine soldier. (suddenly) Are you molly-hawking Seaman Derry?

Oliver jumps with a guilty start. Is his attraction to Dacey so obvious? He gives Joseph a sharp look.

OLIVER

What do you mean? I can control myself.

JOSEPH

Be careful, Oliver. (drily) Heave to, before you cause chaos aboard.

OLIVER

Let's chart our course.

JOSEPH

I knew it. You're falling in love with her.

OLIVER

Enough, Joe. I'm only helping her escape from servitude.

JOSEPH

We both have that in common.

EXT. ON DECK DAY

Joseph comes up deck. Dacey is working with the men. He gives her a nod. She salutes with a tug of her forelock and he goes ashore. Oliver emerges on deck and sees her gazing after his friend with unguarded affection, lips parted, eyes fixed. He stops and looks from her to Joseph. Oliver hides his emotions well. He maintains a smooth face.

EXT. ON DECK NIGHT

Dacey can't concentrate on her duties the next watch.

VOICEOVER (Dacey)

*Four bells gone and so am I.*

In the moonlight she stands on deck, balancing with the roll of the ship. She longs to see Oliver. Second mate and timekeeper Smeaton rings six bells, and still no Oliver.

Time lapse. Eight bells, time to change the watch. Dacey goes below.

INT. BELOW DECKS NIGHT

Dacey silently approaches the captain's bunk. Sweeping aside the curtain, she eases her way to lie beside him.

DACEY

(whispers) Oliver.

He grunts and turns toward her.

OLIVER

Dacey.

They embrace and he kisses her thoroughly and deep, like a bee luxuriating in a sea-rose. She loses herself in his kiss, but finally pulls away.

DACEY

I must go.

OLIVER

Why?

DACEY

I can't love you, Oliver.

OLIVER

(whispers) Why not?

DACEY

I'm in love with another.

He laughs in his throat.

OLIVER

Habersham?

DACEY

(agrees) He is my hero.

OLIVER

Do you realize he is betrothed?

DACEY

Betrothed?

OLIVER

Yes, to a fine lady.

DACEY

Who is she?

OLIVER

Isabella Rae.

DACEY

Isabella! But she's the--

OLIVER

The, yes? Go on.

DACEY

The heartless wretch who holds my indenture. She wouldn't sell it to him. It's the reason I ran away.

OLIVER

Habersham considers her a gentle and lovely fair maiden.

DACEY

Oh my gods and garters! Gentle! Lovely! Why, she's a termagant if ever was one!

Angry, she lapses into her native brogue.

OLIVER

Do you think Habersham would throw her over for a weather-beaten female tar? With sun-burned skin and calloused hands?

Tears burst from her eyes.

DACEY

Is that what I am? No longer fair?

He strokes her hair.

OLIVER

To me you will always be the fairest. I love your hair and the freckles on your nose.

DACEY

Freckles!

She cries harder, and he soothes her.

OLIVER

I'm sorry, Dacey. I only said that to make you relinquish all thought of him. Don't weep. I can't bear your tears.

DACEY

Is it true? Is it true?

OLIVER

Yes, they are betrothed. Why should that bother you?

DACEY

Damn. How could he betray me?

OLIVER

Betray? Was he ever your lover?

DACEY

No, he is too noble to take advantage of my helpless state.

OLIVER

How much more noble am I, to resist you in the face of such provocation?

DACEY

You're the provoking one.

OLIVER

If I am not your lover, push me out.

She brings up both feet and pushes him out of his bunk. He shoots through the curtain and scrambles to his feet, observed by several sailors, who guffaw. He clears his throat.

OLIVER

I had a nightmare.

Climbing gingerly back into his bunk next to the wildcat, who has drawn herself into a ball, he lies down and feigns sleep. After a while, Dacey relaxes and fits her body to his. She puts her arm around him from behind and kisses his ear, but he really is sound asleep. She smiles at learning a fact about the captain. Despite his show of ferocity, he has a gentle heart. When all is clear, she returns to her own bunk.

EXT. AT THE LIBERTY POLE JULY 4, 1775 DAY

ARCHIBALD BULLOCK

Resolved, we will raise a battalion and place Georgia on the same footing with her sister colonies.

Joseph and John Habersham, George Walton and many others volunteer.

THOMAS BROWN

I give to you our sovereign and protector!

He raises a pewter mug.

George the Third, in his most august Title, King--

The Whigs take offense.

OLIVER BOWEN

Men, fetch me a bucket of tar. Mistress Tondee, a bag of feathers, if you please.

They strip him naked, pour hot tar on his pale flesh, and cart him around town. When darkness falls, they illuminate the cart with lanterns. At the Liberty Tree, Mistress Tondee brings him a cup of tea.

JOSEPH HABERSHAM

Now let us hear you toast "Damnation to all Tories and success to American Liberty!"

Thomas Brown weakly obeys and drinks the tea. Dressed in her go-ashore gown, Dacey has tied her hair in a top-knot and pulled on a coif cap. She has followed the crowd and watches with horror.

DACEY

Fie, you rebels, to treat a fellow man that way. Surely he'll want revenge.

She cringes to see Joseph and Oliver laughing.

JACKSON

Set him ablaze!

JOSEPH

No. Do you want murder on your conscience?

OLIVER

Now beg all Americans pardon!

BROWN

(gasps weakly) Beg pardon!

OLIVER

Release him!

The crew drags him out of the cart and Brown falls to the ground, senseless.

INT. BELOW DECKS ABOARD THE SCHOONER DAY

The bosun's whistle shrills.

SALTY

Tumble up!

The starboard watch climbs out of their hammocks and their bare feet hit the deck. Dacey tumbles out of her bunk, barefoot, in tow breeches and a shirt. Pulling on a weskit, she runs up the companionway ladder.

EXT. ON DECK OF THE SCHOONER DAY

SALTY

Up anchor! Make sail! Sheets out!

Dacey joins the others as they uncoil lines, feed them through pulleys, tie them with knots and half-hitch to cleats. The bosun leads a song and the men chime in.

BOSUN

Haul on the bowline, the captain is a-growling

MEN

Haul on the bowline, the bowline haul!

BOSUN

Haul on the bowline, the bully ship's a-rolling

MEN

Haul on the bowline, the bowline haul!

Dacey hops to it, pulling the line with all her might. It pulls her off her feet with each tug. Hoops rise up the mast and the sail fills with the morning breeze.

SALTY

Heave away! Way aloft there, loose topsails!

The schooner rides free.

SALTY

Man topsail halyards! Up with the jib!

Sails filling, the schooner moves down river.

SALTY

Avast heave! (to Dacey) A smart hand! Spin aloft.

She scrambles up the rigging and takes her place as look-out. Off Tybee she sights a ship.

DACEY

On deck, sail two points off the port bow!

OLIVER

Merchant or a man-of-war?

DACEY

Merchantman.

White egrets land on the sandbar at the edge of the channel and perch with pelicans and anhingas. In a turn of the hourglass, the ship heaves into hailing distance. Oliver hails them through a speaking trumpet.

OLIVER

What's your home port?

MERCHANT CAPTAIN

Barbados.

OLIVER

What cargo?

MERCHANT CAPTAIN

Ballast.

Dacey sees a familiar face among the seamen crowding the rail: her brother.

DACEY

Derry! Derry Flynn!

Derry waves his whole arm and calls to her, but she can't hear. His ship sails upriver. Blinking tears from her eyes, she swings around and sights a ship anchored on the coast of Tybee four miles away.

DACEY

On deck, a strange sail. Merchantman.

She points east. Captain Bowen studies the brig through a spyglass and nods with a chuckle.

OLIVER

It's the *Phillippa*! She can't get past us.

He hands the glass to Salty, who laughs. Dacey comes down on deck.

DACEY

Captain, that was my brother, on the Barbados ship.

OLIVER

(snaps) Go below.

Stifling a sob, she goes down the companionway.

INT. BELOW DECKS DAY

Dacey helps Pompei clean up the galley. He notices she is upset and pours her a tot of sherry.

EXT. ON DECK AFTERNOON

The schooner takes up a position beyond the harbor bar and waits. Smeaton rings eight bells. Dacey comes on deck as the British ship gets underway. Before entering Tybee Inlet, their lookout spots the schooner. The *Phillippa* comes about and claps on sail. Hauling her wind, she stands out to sea.

OLIVER

(shouts) She's running for it! Catch her, my bullies!

The *Liberty* raises sail and races after the brig, closer and closer.

OLIVER

(to quartermaster Flaherty) Open up the arms chest. Muskets.

Driscoll and Jessup take up positions. As the ships draw abreast, the schooner fires across the *Phillippa*'s bow with bursts of fire.

OLIVER

(through speaking trumpet) Heave to and identify yourself.

ENGLISH CAPTAIN

(Scots accent) *Phillippa,* Richard Maitland. What ship is that?

OLIVER

(to Dacey) Hoist the ensign.

She runs the red-bordered flag up the mainmast.

OLIVER

*American Liberty,* Oliver Bowen!

SALTY

(to the captain) The wind has turned offshore and the tide runs out.

OLIVER

(nods) Drop anchor for the night.

(to the English captain) Drop anchor! (to Salty) Watch him. Keep him pinned.

EXT. SAVANNAH RIVER DAY

On the sunrise watch, Dacey finds the ships still in place. She brings coffee to the captain, who looks haggard.

OLIVER

That was your brother on the Barbados ship?

DACEY

(stiffly) Aye, Captain.

OLIVER

I'll have Habersham look up the ship and contact him. Is his name Derry Flynn?

DACEY

(smiles) Yes.

A sea breeze and high tide freshen the channel.

OLIVER

(to Captain Maitland, through speaking trumpet) Sail up to Cockspur and drop anchor.

He gestures toward the island.

There. Up ahead to starboard.

They follow the English ship to Cockspur Island. Three hundred Continentals from the fort congregate at the eastern point, which faces open ocean. With its treacherous reef thrust into the Sound, Cockspur guards both channels to the Savannah River. Carolinians on barges row closer.

OLIVER

Seaman Derry, take soundings.

She climbs down into the bow chains, and heaves the lead.

DACEY

Eight fathoms. Six. Three.

OLIVER

Drop anchor! Lower the boat.

Captain Bowen leads a boarding party and Dacey jumps into his dory. They cast off and swarm aboard the enemy ship.

EXT. ABOARD THE PHILLIPPA DAY

Tight-lipped, Captain Maitland hands over his papers. A pilot boat pulls alongside. A smile lights Oliver's face as Joseph Habersham swings over the rail.

OLIVER

The ship's packed with powder, tons of it. That's why he surrendered-- afraid we'd blow him asunder.

Habersham approaches Maitland and shows him a written order from the Provincial Congress.

JOSEPH HABERSHAM

We have orders to confiscate all the gunpowder, shot, bar-lead, sheet-lead and Indian trading arms.

MAITLAND

May I be allowed to depart for Savannah? I must advise His Excellency.

JOSEPH HABERSHAM

Yes, board the pilot boat. Advise our dear Governor Wright what has occurred.

Maitland boards the boat, glaring at Bowen and Habersham, memorizing their faces.

OLIVER

(to the crew) Unload the vessel.

His crew and the Carolinians roll hundreds of kegs of gunpowder, lead bullets and musket balls out of the hold, and transfer them to the *Liberty.* When the *Liberty* can hold no more, the Carolinians load their share aboard longboats. Tallying up the prize, Habersham and Bowen smile and clasp hands.

OLIVER

Nine thousand pounds of gunpowder. We can fill the magazines of Georgia, and have five thousand pounds left over.

JOSEPH

(nods) That we'll ship north to General Washington, for the armies of the United Colonies.

OLIVER

I'll deliver it myself. Take what's left to the city magazine. (dropping his voice, confides) Joe, when you arrive in town, find the Barbados ship. Dacey's brother Derry is aboard.

Nodding, Habersham boards the pilot boat. Rallying his men, Bowen orders them back to the schooner in a dory loaded with powder and guns.

EXT. ON THE SAVANNAH RIVER DAY

Dacey pulls an oar, sore and sweating from the morning's work. She has never seen Oliver so happy. He laughs, eyes gleaming.

OLIVER

That was an easy take.

EXT. ABOARD THE PILOT BOAT DAY

On the way back to Savannah, Richard Maitland stands at the rail, gazing sadly as his former ship falls astern.

MAITLAND

What'll happen to her?

JOSEPH

She'll be returned to you.

PILOT BOAT CAPTAIN

(to Habersham) Can I see you for a moment?

INT. PILOT BOAT CABIN DAY

The pilot boat captain shows Joseph a letter from James Wright to Admiral Graves. The wax seal of the governor has been pried loose. Joseph unfolds the parchment and reads.

JOSEPH

"Rebel boats have bottled up our harbor to plunder anything that arrives here. I beg you dispatch a frigate to disperse them."

Chuckling, Joseph calls for ink and quill.

I think we can improve upon this.

He writes a new letter in the governor's crabbed hand. Imitating Wright, he composes aloud in his flowery style.

JOSEPH

"I now have not any occasion for any vessel of war, and I am clearly of the opinion that His Majesty's service will be better promoted by the absence of any vessels of war in this port."

Warming the wax over a candle flame, he sticks the seal onto the new letter.

(with a grin) Send this to the Admiral instead.

EXT. ATLANTIC SEABOARD DAY

Captain Bowen is up at dawn reading the tide tables and making observations. He swings his spyglass around the horizon.

OLIVER

Oh dear God. There's a squall rising off Hatteras. Steer clear of the sandbanks, Salty.

He hands the spyglass to the mate.

SALTY

(taking a long look) Aye, Captain.

OLIVER

Set a course northeast. Give us more offing.

EXT. OFF CAPE HATTERAS DAY

At noon, Oliver takes out his sextant to fix their position. Close-hauled, they beat up the coast. Black thunderclouds gather ahead.

SMEATON

All hands to shorten sail!

Dacey runs out the companionway into heavy rain, a thirty-knot gale and twenty foot seas. Green seas wash over the deck and waves over the stern. She struggles to join Oliver and finds him tied to the wheel.

OLIVER

(with gritted teeth) Get below!

She holds a hand to her ear and pretends she can't hear him. Everyone is wet to the skin. A topsail has fouled. The canvas is flapping, tearing apart and threatening to snap the mast. Driscoll is up there, sawing away at the halyard on one end of the yard. Dacey climbs to the other end of the yard, cuts the topsail free and lets the wind take it. As they drop to the deck, Driscoll claps her on the back.

DRISCOLL

Good hand!

They scud before a beam sea. Then the weather clears and a favorable gale speeds them northward. The sail-maker pulls out fresh canvas, and the men bend on a new topsail. They open the hatches and dry out the cargo of casks and barrels, two tons of gunpowder they are bringing to Boston.

EXT. OFF NEW ENGLAND DAY

The next day is calm, and Oliver has a chance to reflect. He walks to the rail where Dacey is fishing with a hand-line. Eyes brimming, he grasps her by the shoulder and turns her to face him.

OLIVER

God help me if I lost you, Dacey.

DACEY

I'm as safe on a spar as a bird in the trees.

Her breezy confidence makes him chuckle.

OLIVER

Have a care. (in a soft, confiding voice) You're no more safe on a spar than you are in my bunk.

DACEY

Humph!

She smiles, turning back to the sea.

Look, there's a fish on the line!

He helps her haul a heavy cod aboard.

OLIVER

Pompei! We've caught dinner.

EXT. ABOARD THE SCHOONER IN BOSTON HARBOR NIGHT

On anchor watch off Hull, across from the occupied city of Boston, Dacey stands at the wheel with one hand idly holding a spoke. The night is still. A half moon sails behind clouds like an alabaster vessel of light.

SALTY

A star dogs the moon.

Clouds drift across the moon and its trailing star.

DACEY

That's not a star, it's planet Jupiter. A golden orb of good fortune for us.

JESSUP

(ominous tone) I don't like it. Could be a warship is following us.

The old seafarer is superstitious.

(in a sepulchral voice, intones) Or it could be your debts are following you. Did someone come on this voyage owing money?

Salty and Dacey shrug. No one says anything, but she pictures her unserved indenture papers.

VOICEOVER (Dacey)

*What can I do, if the harridan won't take any money? A white slave is what I am.*

Jessup tosses a shilling in the water.

JESSUP

That'll buy you luck.

EXT. BOSTON HARBOR NIGHT

In two dories, the crew sculls the captain and cargo to Spectacle Island. Sloops meet them flying the "Pine Tree ensign" of Massachusetts, and the "fouled anchor and blue field" of Rhode Island. They load kegs of gunpowder onto a barge.

OLIVER

My compliments to General Washington.

BOSTON REBEL

(hands Oliver sealed orders) Our compliments to you and the fair city of Savannah. We'll never forget this. The powder will supply our troops in Cambridge.

The sloops and the barge get underway. Oliver and his crew return to the ship.

INT. BELOW DECKS NIGHT

Dacey lies in her bunk, trying to sleep. The curtain stirs.

OLIVER

(whispers) Dacey.

She grasps his hand and pulls him in. Kissing him, hips undulating, she breaks away.

DACEY

(murmurs) I love you.

OLIVER

Dacey my dolly, marry me.

He strokes her arm, raising tingles of pleasure along her flesh. She places her hand on his.

DACEY

Don't mock me. I can't bear it.

OLIVER

Upon our return from Boston, we shall dock at Newport, and I will introduce you to my family. I shall ask my brother's blessing on our union.

Waves of pleasure ripple through her at his words.

DACEY

My darling, I will marry you.

EXT. ABOARD THE SCHOONER OFF RHODE ISLAND DAY

The *American Liberty* sails southward for home. During the dog watch, the men sing lustily:

CREW

(sings) We sailed and we sailed

and we made good cheer

for there were many pretty men

on the Yankee privateer.

The song goes into numerous verses about the drubbing they will give the British fleet. They stand off Newport before Dacey finds herself alone again with the captain.

INT. BELOW DECKS DAY

Oliver sits at the chart table with a compass and plots their course.

OLIVER

I'll dock at Bowen's Wharf and call upon my brother. Do you have your go-ashore clothes?

She brings out her one gown, creased and damp, and her straw hat with silk flowers, crushed.

You will need new clothes. There are fine shops in Newport. Can you sew?

DACEY

(smiles) Yes, Oliver. I once was a seamstress.

EXT. NEWPORT DAY

On Thames Street they find a shop with some ready-made gowns.

INT. DRESS SHOP DAY

She chooses a gown of blue brocade. A bonnet and shawl complete the ensemble.

EXT. NEWPORT DAY

Further down Thames Street, they go into a shoe-maker's shop.

INT. SHOE-MAKER'S SHOP

The cobbler measures her foot with a size stick.

COBBLER

Seven.

He uses a tape measure to gauge the width.

COBBLER

Are you interested in leather

slippers?

DACEY

How about that pair in the glass case?

The cobbler brings out the blue silk pumps with applewood high heels, and slides them onto her feet. Dacey has never seen anything so beautiful. She claps her heels together and stands up to walk in them, does a dance step.

OLIVER

(to cobbler) Where did those come from? Are they imported?

COBBLER

Yes, from England.

OLIVER

(to Dacey) Take them off. We're not buying anything from England.

Dacey hangs her head and bites her lips as the beautiful shoes are returned to the display case. The shoe-maker takes a wet leather upper out of a water bucket and stretches it on a last. He fits sole and heel to the upper. Oliver waits, smoking a long clay.

OLIVER

(murmurs in her ear) Oh all right, you can have the dress shoes. (standing up, orders the cobbler) Deliver the flat shoes to the ship *American Liberty*. She'll wear the high heels.

DACEY

Oh thank you, Oliver!

She jumps for joy as the pretty shoes slide onto her feet.

EXT. THAMES STREET DAY

Strolling down Thames Street with a parcel of trinkets for his brother's children, they walk along the shore. Oliver picks up a green stone worn smooth by the sea, with a lighter band around it.

OLIVER

A wishing stone!

He holds it out and closes her hand over it.

If you have a full band, you can make a wish.

She closes her eyes.

VOICEOVER (Dacey)

*I wish for my freedom.*

OLIVER

What did you wish for, Dacey? A kiss?

He supplies one. Dacey smiles as they stroll along the waterfront. She flounces her skirt and dances in her lovely shoes. He holds her hand and swings her close.

EXT. GARDEN OF BOWEN HOUSE DAY

A dock stretches out beyond the lawn, a trim sloop tied up alongside. They come into the herb garden with its sundial. Oliver picks a sprig of lavender and crushes it, waving it under her nose.

OLIVER

(sings) Lavender's blue, dilly dilly, lavender's green.

DACEY

(exclaims) How nice to have your own dock!

Judging by his house, brother Jabez has plenty of worldly goods. They walk up granite steps. Instead of a knocker, the back door has a ship's bell. Oliver rings it lustily, and a dark-haired boy opens the door.

OLIVER

(roars) Oliver!

YOUNG OLIVER

(smiles, exclaims) Uncle Oliver!

Oliver's nephew is overcome with admiration.

Back from your adventures at sea!

INT. JABEZ BOWEN'S HOUSE DAY

Oliver comes into the hallway, followed by Dacey. He sets down the package of gifts and young Oliver tears into it. His two sisters crowd around in their little bell-shaped gowns. Oliver Junior hands out barley sugar, a whistle, and a wooden horse. He keeps a wooden boat for himself.

OLIVER

There was a great storm off Hatteras, and Dacey here cut loose the sail.

Oliver sets gifts on a sideboard.

YOUNG OLIVER

A girl? (with his mouth open) She cut the sail?

DACEY

(modestly) I had a little help.

Jabez and his wife Sarah enter the hallway, he from the study and she from the front parlor. Jabez is older than Oliver and has an austere countenance which doesn't change as Oliver introduces Dacey.

OLIVER

May I present Dacey Flynn. Dacey, this is my brother Jabez and Mistress Sarah Bowen.

The women curtsey.

OLIVER

(to Jabez) I brought you some of that tobacco you like. And for Sarah, a tortoise-shell comb.

He hands them the gifts and Jabez grunts a thank you, while Sarah smiles and graciously accepts. Dacey admires the portraits of illustrious Bowens flanking the long hallway from front to back. Oliver stops in front of a lovely blonde with blue-green eyes.

JABEZ

You don't remember Mother, do you, Oliver? You were only two when she died.

OLIVER

What was she like?

JABEZ

Fair, with her hair like spun gold. And she would sing to us, lullabies and nursery rhymes. She would rock you for hours, for you were a cranky baby. And when she died, we had a nanny. She used to say Nolly was a handful.

Oliver sees Ephraim Junior sitting in the study, reading a book.

OLIVER

And what do you want to be, young Ephraim?

EPHRAIM

A lawyer like my father.

JABEZ

Come out, Ephraim. We men need to talk.

Sarah Bowen shows Dacey into the front parlor while Oliver goes into the study with Jabez.

INT. PARLOR DAY

The women exchange pleasantries. Mistress Bowen rings for tea. The children romp up and down the central hallway. Sarah emerges from the parlor to quiet them, and Dacey follows.

INT. HALLWAY DAY

As Dacey studies the portraits, she hears raised voices from the study.

VOICE OFF (Jabez)

You shouldn't have brought her here.

VOICE OFF (Oliver)

I intend to make her my wife.

VOICE OFF (Jabez)

How could you go from the governor's daughter to that?

Dacey reels with shock. Sarah gives her a look of pity.

VOICE OFF (Oliver)

(growls) As you recall, Polly left me for another. We were divorced, and now I wish to remarry.

His unguarded, loud voice booms.

And I want your blessing.

VOICE OFF (Jabez)

Papa will never countenance it. Besides, it's illegal. A bond servant cannot marry until her indenture is fulfilled.

VOICE OFF (Oliver)

When Habersham marries Isabella Rae, he will control her property, and he has promised to discharge Dacey's indenture.

VOICE OFF (Jabez)

Is that his design in marrying her?

VOICE OFF (Oliver)

(laughs) No, he's madly in love. Blinded by her beauty, he cannot see the shrew for what she is.

Dacey has heard enough. She runs outside.

EXT. HERB GARDEN DAY

Dacey walks up to the sundial. Afternoon shadows settle across the roses as she weeps, beating her breast. Suddenly he is there. Oliver takes her in his arms and she fights him.

DACEY

How could you? Why didn't you tell me?

OLIVER

What, about Polly? (perplexed) A youthful indiscretion. That's long over with.

DACEY

(sobs) Your family will never accept me.

OLIVER

Nonsense. They'll accept you and like it.

He comforts her and kisses away her tears.

You're such a mercurial girl, laughing one moment and weeping the next. Now come back inside. I'm so hungry, I could eat salt horse.

INT. JABEZ BOWEN'S HOUSE DINING ROOM NIGHT

Dacey sips a glass of wine, taking her cues from Sarah. A nanny shoos the children upstairs to the nursery. Dinner is awkward, with little conversation. Jabez addresses himself to the roast duck, and Sarah stirs sliced almonds into the green beans. Dacey hardly eats a bite, but Oliver does justice to the meal.

OLIVER

How fares our father? (to Dacey) Doctor Ephraim Bowen. There's a man who remarried and never looked back.

JABEZ

Our mother passed away. It's hardly the same thing.

OLIVER

Nevertheless, he enjoys a second marriage and many fine children, the old goat.

Dacey stifles a laugh. Sarah looks appalled.

JABEZ

You can call at Providence and see him yourself.

OLIVER

Regrettably, we must sail on the tide. War and all. Please give him my compliments.

JABEZ

Our brother Ephraim is a lieutenant in the Continental Navy.

OLIVER

A good commission.

JABEZ

We have a load of rum at the wharf. Can you ship it to Savannah?

OLIVER

With pleasure. We have plenty of room in the hold, after delivering the powder to General Washington.

Jabez smiles for the first time, and raises his glass to Oliver.

JABEZ

In your own way, you are a patriot. You'll have your battle yet, brother.

EXT. THAMES STREET NIGHT

As they walk back to the ship, Oliver feels like celebrating.

OLIVER

(sings) A frog he would a-wooing go, hey-ho, says Rolly.

He waits for Dacey to join in, but she only fumes.

Whether his mother would let him or no. With a roly-poly gammon and spinach, hey-ho, says Anthony Rolly.

His ebullient mood annoys her. She feels humiliated. Although he defended her and declared his love to his family, there is no reason to celebrate. All he gave her was a stone, and promises. She takes the wishing stone from her pocket and skips it across the water.

EXT. ON DECK OF THE SCHOONER NIGHT

When they return on board the *Liberty*, the men stand agog. Captain Bowen calls them together.

OLIVER

Men, this is Dacey, my fiancée. Treat her with the same respect you would show me.

The deck hands goggle at the erstwhile apprentice.

DRISCOLL

I knew it!

JESSUP

(grumbles) A woman aboard, bad luck. No good will come of it.

SALTY

Without Seaman Derry, we're short a hand.

OLIVER

Sway the rum aboard. If you're quick, it's double rations.

The men jump onto the dock and start rolling a hogshead of rum. While they are occupied, Oliver takes Dacey aside.

OLIVER

We must behave above-board. I won't have the men thinking ill of you.

DACEY

(coolly) Aye, Captain.

Vexed that her secret is out, she goes below.

EXT. ON DECK DAY

Sailing south, Dacey sits on a hatch-cover, patching and sewing the men's clothes. A shadow crosses her and she looks up. Oliver hands her a book and a slate.

OLIVER

My nephew said he was finished with this.

She sticks the needle into the shirt, and stows her mending in a covered basket.

DACEY

What is it?

OLIVER

(reads the title) *"The New England primer, for the more easy attaining the true reading of English."*

He leafs through the pages, and points to the alphabet.

What letter is this?

DACEY

Why it is...D?

OLIVER

Yes, D for Dacey. Now sign your name.

He patiently spells it out and she chalks the letters on the slate.

Time lapse. Every day on the dog watch, they proceed from letters to words of one syllable, and soon Dacey can read a rhyme.

DACEY

"My book and heart must never part."

She hugs the primer to her breast and smiles at Oliver.

I may be bold and saucy, but I am no longer ignorant.

EXT. ON DECK DAY

Dacey, dressed in sailor slops again, resumes her duties. Salty greets her with a warm clasp on the shoulder.

SALTY

Hey, it's-a seaman Derry. We like you better this way.

She smiles for the first time in days.

INT. BELOW DECKS NIGHT

That night in Oliver's bunk, they each confide their plans.

DACEY

When we return to Savannah, I must speak to Joseph Habersham.

OLIVER

Good. He can put you up. Now that we're heading into battle, you must go ashore.

DACEY

No, Oliver. I love the sea, and I have feared the shore, lest I be apprehended. Must I face my fate? Where are you going?

He doesn't like it when she is curious. He deflects questions.

OLIVER

Into dangerous waters. More I cannot say, but I won't risk your life and safety. You must be patient. Talk to Habersham.

DACEY

Ah well. I cannot run any more. My word is my bond, and I suppose I must serve my indenture. It's the only way out for me.

OLIVER

(choked up) Oh, Dacey! How can I leave you like this?

DACEY

I must work, and pay my way.

He hugs her tight.

OLIVER

When I come back, we shall be wed, and you shall never work again.

DACEY

(teasing) Never? Yes Nolly, my jolly.

She tickles him and makes him laugh.

DACEY

I hope you remember that when you want your stays tarred.

EXT. ON DECK NIGHT

At night they follow the Milky Way, pegged by the summer triangle. The stars dip into the sea. Southward burns the red heart of Scorpio. The sea is black and a lantern on deck makes a golden light.

EXT. SAVANNAH HARBOR DAY

Dockside in Savannah, Joseph Habersham meets the schooner and greets Captain Bowen. Oliver stands at the taffrail.

OLIVER

We have hogsheads of rum for the warehouse, compliments of my brother.

JOSEPH

(smiles) Rum's in great demand. We will get a good price.

OLIVER

We're going to refit, then out to sea again.

Dacey comes down the gangplank in her feminine finery. Joseph Habersham looks like he is seeing a vision.

JOSEPH

Good afternoon, Dacey.

OLIVER

Can you put her up for a while?

Joseph nods agreement. Dacey looks askance. As Oliver turns to his duties, she steps from the gangplank to the dock. She stands on tiptoe to kiss Joseph on the cheek. Grasping his arm, she sashays off with him, flirtatiously swinging her skirts, but she hasn't counted on her sea legs. Feeling like she is in an earthquake, she dizzies and almost loses her balance. Joseph catches and steadies her.

JOSEPH

(smiles) I've caught you again.

She glances back to see Oliver watching with a stony expression.

EXT. SAVANNAH DAY

Dacey and Joseph walk to Abercorn.

JOSEPH

I just returned from Charleston myself. I need to catch up with the news.

DACEY

Is it true that you are betrothed to Isabella Rae?

JOSEPH

Yes.

DACEY

My slave-master?

JOSEPH

It was arranged by our parents long ago. When we're married, I will own your papers and I will set you free. I trust she will make no strenuous objection.

DACEY

(scoffs) Do not marry her on my account.

JOSEPH

(laughs) You are saucy! I should have heeded that bounty-hunter.

DACEY

Did you find the Barbados ship?

JOSEPH

Yes. Your brother jumped ship. He's somewhere in the city.

INT. BEDCHAMBER IN THE PINK HOUSE DAY

Habersham searches a box in the highboy bonnet.

JOSEPH

This is our post box. When we were children, my brothers and I used to post each other letters.

A secret compartment behind the carving hides a wooden box. Joseph pulls out a letter, breaks the seal and reads.

JOSEPH

It's from Jemme. "Father went to his reward, a fever took him off. He didn't suffer."

His voice breaks. He looks down, and grief shakes his frame. Dacey pats his shoulder.

DACEY

I am sorry. He was a good man.

JOSEPH

"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want..." (choking with emotion, he grinds out) Dear Papa, how sorry I am that we quarreled.

Gathering his self-control, he reads further.

"He left each of us a plantation. Yours is Beverley. You can draw on your account at the exchange. Our friends meet here on the dark of the moon. I remain your devoted brother, Jemme."

Joseph ponders the message.

JOSEPH

Nothing about John? Where's John?

They return downstairs.

INT. THE PINK HOUSE PARLOR DAY

Joseph and Dacey meet Bertha and Henry in the parlor.

JOSEPH

(to Henry) Is there any word from John? Do you know where he is?

HENRY

His regiment marched north. I expect they're in Carolina.

BERTHA

(to Dacey) We have a new groom. An Irish lad, says he knows you.

Dacey gasps as joy streams through her. She runs outside.

EXT. HABERSHAM'S STABLE DAY

A young man with auburn hair pitches hay into a stall.

DACEY

Derry!

She embraces her younger brother, who is taller than she is.

I never thought I would see you again.

They laugh and whirl around, holding hands.

DERRY

Dacey! How came you to be a look-out on a ship?

DACEY

Passed myself off as a boy.

DERRY

Dear Dacey, my daisy girl. How good it is to see you.

DACEY

Is there any word from Father?

Derry sighs and looks down.

DERRY

Father passed away, months ago.

DACEY

Dear Father. (sighs, making the sign of the Cross) I had a feeling he was gone. Our Father, who art in heaven...

Joseph Habersham looks into the stable.

JOSEPH

I don't recognize this horse.

A bay stallion sticks his head out of a stall, and Joseph strokes his nose.

DERRY

He's boarding here. (smiles)

JOSEPH

Who owns him?

DERRY

Ahh, you might say, I do. He followed me home.

JOSEPH

(laughs) Now I'm harboring three fugitives, and one's a horse. What do you call him?

DERRY

Riley. Riley Tatnall.

JOSEPH

Oh, well, if you confiscated Tory property for the Rebel cause, then let them look to their just desserts.

Isabella comes to join Joseph and sees Dacey with a start of recognition, but nobody says anything.

EXT. GARDEN DAY

Joseph takes Isabella for a stroll in the garden. A little green lizard darts across the stone wall. A painted bunting flies into the shrubbery. Tiger swallowtails flit around the honeysuckle. A frog squawks in the fountain pool. Isabella smiles up at Joseph, tucking her hand into his elbow.

ISABELLA

When shall we be wed?

JOSEPH

In May, if it suits you.

ISABELLA

Jonathan Bryan has offered us Brampton for the wedding.

JOSEPH

Kind of him.

He kisses her hand and draws her close. He leans over to kiss her cheek. Dacey strides up to the loving couple and makes a curtsey.

DACEY

Do you still need a dressmaker, milady?

Isabella opens her mouth and looks up at Joseph with a droll expression.

ISABELLA

Yes, Dacey, I certainly do. I need your expert hands to sew my gown and trousseau.

DACEY

Then I will be pleased to return to your service.

Dacey curtsies again and backs away. Joseph stares after her.

INT. PINK HOUSE CELLAR NIGHT

Dacey and her brother have supper in the cellar kitchen with Henry and Bertha.

DACEY

I miss Mother. The way she used to sing and play the fiddle.

DERRY

(nods) She was beautiful. Ah well, they're together now.

DACEY

And we both have years to go on our indenture. What shall we do?

DERRY

I'm going to work here, as long as they'll have me.

DACEY

I doubt if we'll ever see Ireland again.

DERRY

Why would you want to go back there? This is the promised land. A fair prospect, so rich and free.

DACEY

(nods, considering) It's free enough, if free we be. At any rate, our ties to Ireland are cut. I'm in love with a fine man, and he has asked me to marry him. Oliver Bowen.

Bertha looks surprised and gives Henry a significant look.

DERRY

I'm glad for you, sister. I have heard him spoken of highly.

DACEY

Are you with the Patriots, or the Tories?

DERRY

(thinks it over) I suppose we have to choose sides, even though it's not our fight.

Dacey looks askance, but Henry and Bertha nod solemnly.

DACEY

Not our fight? Isn't British oppression always our fight? We wouldn't have been in poverty if the Sassenach hadn't taken our land.

Derry nods, looking outside at the moonlight.

DERRY

That's true. The Flynns were landed gentry once.

DACEY

(smiles) We haven't been gentry since Brian was king.

INT. COACH ON THE ROAD DAY

Dacey rides to Rae's Hall in Isabella's carriage. The young lady across from her is a happy bride, whose sparkling eyes gaze at verdant azaleas and magnolias.

ISABELLA

(hums to herself, sings)

I'll give to you a paper of pins, for that's the way our love begins,

if you will marry me me me,

if you will marry me.

Dacey feels a wave of sadness and turns her face away.

ISABELLA

Don't you like my singing?

DACEY

Oh, yes, ma'am. If only you would choose a different song.

Silence falls. After a while, Isabella speaks up.

ISABELLA

We're not so very different. My grandfather came from Ireland.

DACEY

Really, what part?

ISABELLA

(shrugs) The Irish part.

Dacey smiles.

EXT. RAE'S HALL PLANTATION DAY

At Rae's Hall, they descend from the coach and are met by house servants in livery. A maid escorts Dacey inside.

INT. RAE'S HALL BEDCHAMBER DAY

Dacey sits near the window, sewing a white wedding gown for Isabella. Her hands are so calloused from handling ropes and sails, she can hardly thread the needle. She struggles to keep the stitches even, and when the thread gets tangled, her speech is so callous, she turns the air blue like a salty sailor.

DACEY

Damn thread!

ISABELLA

(reproachful) You didn't used to curse.

DACEY

Beg pardon, Madam. Oh you foul, stupid thread! Belay or I'll cut you.

Draping and fitting the gown on Isabella, she sticks herself with a pin.

DACEY

Oh!

Her finger is bleeding and Isabella hands her a handkerchief. Dacey wets it and tries to get the spot out of the dress.

ISABELLA

Leave it. It's good luck.

Dacey looks surprised at her kindness. Sewing grows quickly tedious. The constricting stays of women's undergarments, frocks and bonnets irritate her.

INT. KITCHEN AT RAE'S HALL DAY

During a tea party, the common women gather to exchange gossip in the kitchen. The neighbors, wives of farmers and fishermen, congregate at Rae's Hall, in the kitchen with the black cook Mandy. One plays a dulcimer, while another strips lavender buds and grinds them in a mortar. One dips candles and another makes soap. Dacey plunges the dasher up and down in the churn until the butter separates from the buttermilk. Packing the butter into a tub, she salts it to keep.

VOICEOVER (Dacey)

*Where are you, Oliver? Are you safe? Do you love me still?*

A baby boy frets and cries. His white face flushes red and he pulls his ear.

MANDY

Polite! Polite! Where is that girl?

A pretty quadroon comes in and picks up the big baby, walking with him, but he continues to scream.

MANDY

(fusses) What good is that girl! Miss Isabella brought her from Dean Forest, specially for a governess, and she can't do nothing.

Polite looks anxious. Her large, dark eyes sweep the room for an ally. Dacey gives her a smile and a little wave.

MANDY

(mutters) Gives herself airs cause she free. Her grandmama a white servant had truck with a African slave. So her mama a free woman, and she took up with a white man.

Polite puts on a haughty expression and pretends not to hear. The baby refuses to be comforted and Dacey stands up to help, when Isabella appears and takes him. She jounces him and walks. He calms down, and she pets him. His mother returned from the dairy, and Isabella turns the baby over to her.

INT. RAE'S HALL PARLOR DAY

Isabella's sister Elizabeth comes to visit, and Isabella rings for tea. Serving, Dacey lingers in the doorway, closely observes the manners and speech of Isabella and her sister. When Elizabeth sits down, her back doesn't touch the chair. Her hands rest on the arms as if useless. She speaks in a leisurely drawl. Dacey holds her hands the same way and tosses her head as if she is a fine lady.

ELIZABETH

I've heard so much about this wedding dress, I would like to see it.

ISABELLA

Is it ready, Dacey?

DACEY

Yes, ma'am. If you would come upstairs.

INT. ISABELLA'S BEDCHAMBER DAY

Distracted, Dacey gathers the hem too much, making a pucker in the white silk. She tries to fix it, but cannot. Isabella takes the garment behind a screen and tries it on.

Isabella doesn't say anything, but wears the gown proudly. Elizabeth beams her approval.

ISABELLA

(kindly) Thank you, Dacey.

Dacey smiles at Isabella as if she is beginning to like her.

EXT. RAE'S HALL GARDEN DAY

White cups of magnolia stand above orange coreopsis, blue delphiniums, purple verbena and yellow snapdragons in the flowerbed. Dacey walks in the garden and Polite catches up with her.

POLITE

Miss Dacey! Come and see!

She leads Dacey on a path into the pine woods and shows her a bird's nest. Babbling nonstop, the girl asks questions, sings a tune, whistles, and dances around. She makes Dacey smile with her constant chatter. Finally they come to a wax myrtle bush.

POLITE

Look under there!

DACEY

I don't see anything.

POLITE

Look again.

Dacey peers into the shadows and makes out two fawns, spotted white on brown, hidden in the dappled shade.

DACEY

Why, Polite. Thank you for showing me.

POLITE

I like you, Miss Dacey.

DACEY

I like you too, Polite.

The eleven-year-old beauty likes to tease and play like any other child. She shows Dacey a pool in the creek where they both strip to their chemise and swim without being seen. They dry themselves in the sun, get dressed and return to the house at dinnertime.

INT. TONDEE'S TAVERN LONG ROOM JANUARY 1776 DAY

The Provincial Congress meets with Archibald Bulloch presiding. Present are Button Gwinnett, Lyman Hall, George Walton, Lachlan McIntosh, Samuel Elbert, Noble Wimberly Jones, Jonathan Bryan, John Habersham, Oliver Bowen and Joseph Habersham. John Houstoun records the minutes.

ARCHIBALD BULLOCH

Resolved that we send delegates Button Gwinnett, Lyman Hall, and George Walton to the Continental Congress.

MEN

(in unison) Aye!

ARCHIBALD BULLOCH

The motion is carried. Resolved that we raise twenty five hundred pounds for the defense of the Province.

MEN

Aye!

The motion is carried. Resolved that we organize a battalion of five companies with Lachlan McIntosh as colonel, Samuel Elbert lieutenant colonel, Joseph Habersham major, First Lieutenant John Habersham, and Captain Oliver Bowen.

MCINTOSH

Raise your right hand and repeat after me. (leading them in the Minuteman Oath)

ALL

(in unison) We trust in God that, should the state of our affairs require it, we shall be ready to sacrifice our estates and everything dear in life, yea, and life itself, in support of the common cause.

INT. GOVERNOR'S HOUSE NIGHT

Sir James Wright sits at his desk with a candle burning, writing with a quill.

WRIGHT

I beg you to recall me. A king's governor has little or no use here. When I tried to reconvene the Royal Assembly, the members refused. I request troops to quell the uprising.

He sprinkles the letter with sand and blows it off, folds the letter, drips melted wax on it, and seals it with the royal seal. Writing on the reverse, To Parliament.

INT. PINK HOUSE CELLAR NIGHT

The Council of Safety meets with Oliver, Joseph, Jones, Bulloch, Bryan, and Walton. It is cold but the fireplace is not lit. One lantern sheds a dim light. The men keep their coats on.

OLIVER

Two British men-of-war with a troop transport have anchored off Tybee.

ARCHIBALD BULLOCH

Resolved that the persons of Sir James Wright, John Mulryne and Josiah Tatnall be arrested and secured, and that all non-associates be forthwith disarmed, so that there might be no longer any show of English dominion within the limits of the province.

MEN

Aye!

ARCHIBALD BULLOCH

The ayes have it. The motion is carried.

Joseph Habersham stands up.

JOSEPH

May I offer my services to apprehend the governor?

EXT. GOVERNOR'S HOUSE NIGHT

Joseph arrives at the door of Government House. Greeted by the sentry, he strides into the hall where Wright sits with his council.

INT. GOVERNOR'S HOUSE GREAT HALL NIGHT

SIR JAMES WRIGHT

Good evening, Joseph.

Joseph Habersham places his hand on Wright's shoulder.

JOSEPH

Sir James, you are my prisoner.

Startled, Wright shrinks down as his councilors run out the door and leap from the windows. Habersham laughs at their panic.

(laughing) I have no army with me. I am alone.

SIR JAMES WRIGHT

(sulking, chagrined) You defied the power of the Realm, and humbled the representative of the Crown, in the Colony I was commissioned to rule. I know you don't approve of my policies, Joe, but it is my duty to carry out my orders, even when I don't agree with them.

JOSEPH

The same goes for me. If you give me your word not to communicate with the British off Tybee, I shall let you stay here.

SIR JAMES WRIGHT

(looks sly) I give my word.

Time lapse. Placed under house arrest, Wright languishes for two months. Mobs of shouting rebels harass him and fire on the house.

EXT. GOVERNOR'S HOUSE NIGHT

Sir James slips out the back door of the mansion.

EXT. RIVER STREET AND STRAND NIGHT

Sir James scurries along the riverbank until he comes to twin rows of live oaks at the plantation of John Mulryne. Mulryne welcomes the haggard and winded James Wright at Bonaventure with a dimmed lantern.

MULRYNE

I have a sloop and crew ready at your disposal. I'll go with you. I don't believe the Rebels will dare to lay hands on me. (stoutly)

Wright boards the sloop and sails down Tybee Creek to the mouth of the river, where lies the *Scarborough* (20 guns). At dawn Wright boards the warship.

INT. CAPTAIN'S CABIN ON THE SCARBOROUGH DAY

CAPTAIN BARCLAY

As you can see, Sir James, our seamen and troops are starving and desperate.

SIR JAMES WRIGHT

If you will give me your word that you will not attack the town...

CAPTAIN BARCLAY

If we are allowed to purchase provisions, I promise you, we will not attack.

Sir James writes a letter.

SIR JAMES

Honorable Gentlemen,--After having had a conversation with his Majesty's Officers here, I have the great satisfaction to be able to affirm that the forces now here will not commit any hostilities against this Province, though fully sufficient to reduce and overcome every opposition that could be attempted to be made; and that nothing is meant or wanted but a supply of fresh provisions.

He seals and addresses it "To the Provincial Congress."

INT. TONDEE'S LONG ROOM DAY

A meeting of the Provincial Congress: Habersham, Jones, Walton, Bryan, Hall, Bulloch, and Houstoun.

NOBEL WIMBERLY JONES

(exclaims) Ha! Does he think we still trust him? Disingenuous, yet with a threat imbedded...He goes on to say, `His Majesty has been graciously pleased to grant me leave to return to England, and my regard for the Province is such that I cannot avoid exhorting the poeple to save themselves from that total ruin and destruction which I most clearly see at their doors, and I cannot leave without warning them in the most earnest and friendly manner, to desist from their present plans. I will endeavour to obtain for them full pardon and forgiveness for all past crimes and offenses, and this I conjure you to consider well before it's too late. Be it remembered that I this day in the King's name offer the people of Georgia the Olive branch, that most inestimable blessing, the return of peace to them and their posterity. I am with perfect esteem, Gentlemen, Your most obedient and faithful servant, James Wright."

Noble Jones folds the letter amid a hubbub of voices. Some agree, if Wright would return to England. Others don't trust his promises. The request is voted down, and Archibald Bulloch writes a cryptic response to Wright.

INT. CAPTAIN'S CABIN ON THE SCARBOROUGH DAY

Sir James writes another letter.

SIR JAMES WRIGHT

If Georgians will not be their own friends, the Province will blame them and not me who through friendship put it in their power to be happy.

CAPTAIN BARCLAY

Enough debate. There are eleven merchant ships full of rice moored in Five-Fathom Hole. I'm going to direct the *Scarborough*, the *Tamer*, the *Cherokee*, and the *Hinchinbrook* to capture them. And I'm sending troop transports into the city.

SIR JAMES

But Captain Barclay, can't we try diplomacy one more time?

BARCLAY

Sir James, the time for diplomacy is past. We'll bribe the rice merchants with gold, and prepare for war.

EXT. SAVANNAH RIVER DAY

The *Hinchinbrook* sails up the Back River behind Hutchinson's Island and runs aground on the west side, across from Rae's Hall. Joseph Habersham marches to Isabella's plantation with two companies of riflemen. They take up a position opposite the schooner and fire on the crew until they go below.

EXT. RAE'S HALL RIVERFRONT NIGHT

300 British march across Hutchinson's Island and take possession of the rice ships on the river. Cannon and muskets exchange fire.

INT. THE PINK HOUSE CELLAR DAY

The Council of Safety meets in the Pink House cellar.

JOSEPH HABERSHAM

The House of Commons has passed the Pirate Act, empowering the King to detain persons charged with the crime of piracy upon the ships and goods of His Majesty's subjects. There will be no due process or prisoner exchange. Any sea captain can be summarily hanged.

OLIVER BOWEN

(scoffs) They have to catch us first.

BULLOCH

Resolved: to defend the town so long as it is tenable, and that, rather than it should be held by the enemy, it, and the shipping in the port, shall be burned.

The motion carries.

OLIVER BOWEN

(stands up) I have my orders.

EXT. SAVANNAH RIVER DAY

Oliver Bowen and Lieutenant James Jackson burn the *Inverness* and turn her adrift. The *Inverness* sets two other rice ships on fire. British sailors jump off and flee into the marsh, becoming a target for Habersham and the Americans on the bluff at Rae's Hall. Bowen and his crew unrig three vessels, dismast them, unhang the rudders and bring them ashore. Another three ships return to the town dock. The last two rice ships move to the Royalists' side. At high tide, the *Hinchinbrook* and rice ships sail out to sea, and the British get their provisions.

EXT. BRAMPTON PLANTATION MAY 1776 DAY

Joseph Habersham has been promoted to colonel in the Continental Battalion. He proudly appears at the home of Jon Bryan in a blue coat, faced, cuffed and caped with yellow, and a matching waistcoat. White egret plumes bob on his hat, and a gilt gorget with coiled rattlesnakes shines, engraved "1st Continental Regiment." Oliver Bowen arrives with him, dressed in equal splendor as a naval commodore. The two are in good spirits, bantering and engaging playful jabs. Dacey runs up to them. The families of Joseph Habersham and Isabella Rae gather for the wedding near a gazebo decorated with white ribbons.

Oliver takes Dacey for a walk in the garden and they find privacy in the green tunnel of a grape arbor.

INT. GRAPE ARBOR DAY

Hidden from view, Dacey and Oliver embrace. He kisses her lips raw.

OLIVER

When can we be wed? Have you found us a minister?

DACEY

Oh Nolly, who would marry us? Let's just jump the broom.

OLIVER

(protests) I want to be married in a church, before God.

DACEY

Let's enjoy the happiness of Joseph and Isabella.

OLIVER

Yes, darling. But have you heard the great news?

DACEY

No, what?

OLIVER

On May the fourth, Rhode Island became the first colony to declare independence from England.

DACEY

The first? You think there will be others?

He nods, smiling.

OLIVER

All of them.

Jemme and John Habersham congratulate their brother. Isabella's sister Elizabeth arrives with her young husband Sam Elbert. John and Sam proudly wear their Continental uniforms. They sit in the shade, enjoying mugs of ale with host Jon Bryan. Suddenly a shout comes from the kitchen.

MANDY

Polite has been stung by a bee!

John Habersham starts up out of his seat and runs into the kitchen.

INT. BRAMPTON KITCHEN DAY

Bouquets of roses and gardenias stand in the kitchen. The gardenia buds unwhorl their spiral, releasing their scent. Polite is sitting on a chair, while Mandy applies potash, Bertha vinegar, and Dacey an ointment to her swollen eyelid. Once John is satisfied that she is well taken care of, he rejoins the men. Dacey raises her eyebrows.

EXT. BRAMPTON BARN DAY

Slave preacher Andrew Bryan conducts a wedding in the barn. Dacey brings Oliver to the barn door to see two servants jump the broom. The lovely bride bears a circlet of daisies on her hair. The groom gives her an ivory ring. Dacey sighs wistfully, hoping Oliver will follow suit, but his stern, solemn looks preclude it. A banjo player strikes up a lively tune while a boy clacks hambones. The newlyweds dance to "Shady Grove." Dacey wants to jig. She taps her foot and swings her skirts. Oliver draws her away to join the crowd celebrating the Habershams' wedding.

EXT. BRAMPTON GARDEN DAY

The white folks' music is a stately cotillion played by a string trio. The dancers form up in sets of eight and take hands. The couples balance, make a rigadoon and a chassé, and step to the right. The women come forward, then the men.

Jemme and his wife Hester's children play hide-and-seek among the dancers during the grand chain. Jemme disciplines them in his mild way, while Hester talks to her brother, Colonel Richard Wylly and his wife Mary Bryan, niece of Jon Bryan.

Dacey is standing near Hester and her brother. Richard stiffly bows to the bride and bridegroom, glares at Oliver Bowen, and takes his leave. On his way past Jemme, Richard seizes his coat-sleeve.

RICHARD

(warning) Watch your step, James. Your name has been mentioned as an enemy of the King. They know you finance the rebels.

Jemme pales and gives Hester a worried look.

The feasting carries on long after the newlyweds depart.

EXT. TRUSTEES GARDEN DAY

BULLOCH

When in the course of human events...

Bulloch reads the Declaration of Independence to cheers from the populace. Dacey joins the revelers. Standing under blossoming peach trees, she puts her hands over her ears as cannon fire a 13-gun salute.

Sound: A TATTOO of muffled drums. The Liberty Boys march down Broad Street with solemn step. Dressed in black broadcloth, Oliver and Joseph lead the pall-bearers carrying a coffin with an effigy of George III. They stop at the Trustees Garden and upset the coffin, laughing when the dummy rolls out. Men stand with heads bowed, swords at rest and arms muzzle-down. Then they look up with smiles on their faces. Dacey shakes her head and makes the sign of the cross.

VOICEOVER (Dacey)

*Surely they are tempting fate to mock death itself.*

Oliver comes over to her, beaming with smiles.

OLIVER

Do you know what this means, Dacey? We have a country. We can equip privateers and sail under letters of marque, without being hanged as pirates.

They go into the Pirates House for a drink.

INT. THE PIRATES HOUSE TAVERN DAY

Oliver goes to the bar and orders rum. He and Dacey sit at a corner table.

OLIVER

(confides) I'm sailing to Florida. Tory raiders, the Florida Rangers are stealing livestock and slaves. After we tarred and feathered Thomas Brown, he joined forces with Dan McGirth. They plunder, burn and destroy all the Whigs' property.

DACEY

McGirth. Where I have heard--?

OLIVER

He was a scout for the Americans before he changed sides. He owns a swift mare called "The Grey Goose." An officer wanted the horse and McGirth defied him and he was flogged. He escaped on his mare and joined Brown's Rangers. They steal cattle and drive the herds over the line to Florida.

DACEY

I've heard Indian war drums, too.

OLIVER

(nods) We're hemmed in. General Sir Henry Clinton is marching on us with his army, and Lord Howe advances with his fleet.

OLIVER

(laughs) The Admiral threatened to hang me and Habersham at his yardarm.

Dacey doesn't think it's funny.

DACEY

Don't leave me here. Take me with you!

OLIVER

You know, this time, I think you might be safer aboard the Liberty.

INT. GOVERNMENT HOUSE February 1777 DAY

The Provincial Congress has split into two parties, the City Whigs and the Country Whigs. Button Gwinnett, Lyman Hall, and George Walton return from the Continental Congress to find the factions quarreling.

BULLOCH

(to Lachlan McIntosh) As Governor, I beg you will immediately order the sentinel to be withdrawn from my door. The grenadiers are already removed. I act for a free people, in whom I have an entire confidence, and would wish upon all occasions to avoid ostentation.

MCINTOSH

That's very modest of you, but I fear for your personal safety.

BULLOCH

No one has a quarrel with me. I get on with both sides.

MCINTOSH

And you're the only one that does.

DR. GEORGE WELLS

I demand to be recognized.

BULLOCH

(looks down at him disdainfully) The chair recognizes Doctor Wells.

DR. WELLS

I have an issue with the City Whigs letting those damn redskins keep their hunting ground on the Oconee strip. I bought that land and I want them off.

JON BRYAN

You aren't going to cheat the Creeks out of their land.

MCINTOSH

(mutters) ...not for any Loyalist snake oil salesman who bites off the ear of a man in a fight, and runs off with someone else's wife.

BULLOCH

We will take the Oconee strip under advisement. General McIntosh, tell the militia to hold yourselves ready to turn out with arms at a moment's notice.

DR. WELLS

I'm not finished!

BULLOCH

(bangs the gavel) The meeting is adjourned.

INT. MASONIC LODGE KITCHEN NIGHT

Dr. Wells tarries in the kitchen where the baker is stirring spiced meat for a pie with apples, raisins, wine, cinnamon and sugar.

DR. WELLS

Smells good, can I have a taste?

BAKER

No. That's for the governor.

He takes a pie crust out of the oven. While his back is turned, Wells sprinkles white powder in the saucepan and stirs it in.

DR. WELLS

Sure smells good.

BAKER

Shoo fly! (waving his arms)

INT. MASONIC LODGE DINING ROOM NIGHT

After dinner, Archibald Bulloch collapses in agony, paralyzed. George Walton, James Jackson and Samuel Elbert jump to his aid, but he dies without speaking another word. He stares up sightless at the all-seeing eye painted on the ceiling.

EXT. OUTSIDE CHRIST CHURCH DAY

Black horses pull a hearse. Solemn mourners gather behind.

BUTTON GWINNETT

We have received a letter from John Adams. "The death of Archibald Bulloch is a heavy loss to Georgia, at a moment when it can hardly be borne, for all parties of Liberty men are united on him, and on him alone."

A crowd of sobbing women and somber men follows the hearse to the graveyard.

INT. BAKERY SHOP DAY

Dacey questions the baker.

DACEY

Governor Bulloch's corpse looked strangely well-preserved. Doctor Wells said it was gastro-enteritis. Now Wells's friend Button Gwinnett has been confirmed as Governor.

BAKER

I know, it do seem suspicious. Why, that doctor was there, that no-good Doctor Wells. Tasting the food, and acting all funny. Why would a healthy man like Governor Bulloch die like that? It wasn't from my cooking!

INT. GOVERNMENT HOUSE DAY

A meeting of the General Assembly.

BUTTON GWINNETT

General McIntosh, you will recognize my authority!

MCINTOSH

You've locked my brother up for treason! Treason!

BUTTON GWINNETT

We have here a letter from the British, thanking your brother for his aid. He was smuggling supplies.

MCINTOSH

You, sir, are a scoundrel.

DR. WELLS

(to Gwinnett) Are you going to let him insult you like that?

GWINNETT

(to McIntosh) I demand satisfaction.

DR. WELLS

I'll stand as second to Governor Gwinnett.

JOSEPH HABERSHAM

(looks around, then reluctantly) I will act as second to General McIntosh.

The room erupts in pandemonium.

EXT. WRIGHT'S MEADOW DAY

A crowd gathers in Wright's meadow. The combatants walk behind trees to conceal themselves. Dacey fears for Joseph Habersham. Edging closer, she stands with a handkerchief pressed to her mouth. She sees the duelists walk four paces, and turn. Pistol shots ring out, and both men drop, hit in the leg. The seconds lift them to their feet.

DR. WELLS

Do you want to shoot again?

GWINNETT and MCINTOSH

We do.

Joseph Habersham stops them.

JOSEPH

Your honor as gentlemen has been satisfied.

The two shake hands.

EXT. CHRIST CHURCH DAY

Dacey and Oliver join the mournful procession to the graveyard. Oliver is in uniform.

DACEY

(to Oliver) It was the incompetent care he received. Gwinnett suffered blood poisoning.

OLIVER

Now who will govern?

Dressed in civilian clothes, Joseph Habersham comes over to them.

JOSEPH

Since I participated in a duel, I've been cashiered out of the army. McIntosh had to leave town.

OLIVER

(nods) He said he was going to join General Washington at Valley Forge. Who's in the command of the battalion?

JOSEPH

Sam Elbert.

OLIVER

That whipper-snapper?

DACEY

When do we sail?

EXT. AT SEA ON DECK OF THE SCHOONER APRIL 1778 DAY

Cruising off Saint Augustine, Bowen harasses British shipping as they approach the fort. A frigate is anchored in the harbor and several sloops dart back and forth.

BOWEN

That's enough for one day. Set a course north, Salty.

The men and Dacey raise sail. Lusty voices sing a call and response.

SMEATON

(sings) Way down south where the cocks do crow

CREW

(sings) Way down in Florida

SMEATON

Young gals dance to the old banjo

CREW

And we'll roll the woodpile down.

ALL

Rolling, rolling

Rolling the whole world 'round

That brown gal of mine on the Georgia line

Roll the woodpile down.

INT. BELOW DECKS AT THE TABLE NIGHT

The men and Dacey share a meal and tell yarns.

LONG

You've heard of fearsome Dan McGirth and his spectral horse.

JESSUP

Shh! It's bad luck to say that word.

LONG

She once was an elegant, beautiful mare, but now she's a bald-faced pony. Swift as the wind and flies like a bat through the air.

HENRY

If he catches you, McGirth will hang you and throw what's left to the Indians. They'll rip your guts out and finish you off with knives.

Henry holds up his pigtail and makes a scalping motion. Oliver hugs Dacey around the shoulders.

OLIVER

Don't worry, Dacey. I'd never let you fall into his hands.

She stands up and they both move aside.

DACEY

You must treat me like one of the men, and not afford me any special protection.

His eyes flash.

OLIVER

(in a soft, secretive tone) You will keep ship. That's an order.

DACEY

But captain, the men won't accept me if I can't do as they do.

OLIVER

Obey or I'll have you flogged.

DACEY

Oh, will you now? Shall I doff my shirt?

OLIVER

(smiles) Wait till you see how I punish you!

EXT. ABOARD THE SCHOONER DAY

At low tide, the crew lowers the dory. Captain Bowen, Lieutenant James Jackson, and two other officers prepare to go ashore.

OLIVER

Mister Salty, who can you spare to row the dory?

SALTY

(glances at the crew) Starboard watch.

Five men and Dacey step forward.

OLIVER

Arms.

Flaherty unlocks the arms chest and hands out swords and pistols. Driscoll takes a musket. Dacey buckles on a saber. Climbing over the side, they clamber into the boat and muffle the oarlocks with wadding.

OLIVER

(to Salty) Stand off.

As they row ashore, those aboard maneuver the schooner farther out to sea.

EXT. ON THE DORY DAY

Dacey slings a spyglass on a strap over her shoulder, and takes her place on the bow oar. She can see Oliver's face studying hers. His expression is determined and his lips compress as he contemplates their danger. He speaks in low tones to Lieutenant Jackson. They run the boat into shore and drag it onto the beach, throwing palm fronds over it.

OLIVER

(to Driscoll) Guard the boat. If we're not back by high tide, return aboard.

Lining up his compass, he marches off into the palmettos with Jackson and the two officers. Looking for a high point to observe the surroundings, Dacey leaps for the lowest branch of a pine tree and swings herself up, climbing fifty feet up in the treetop. The *Liberty* in the offing tacks back and forth in a light breeze. She sweeps the area with the spyglass. Inland is dense vegetation. To the south are swamps and green hills forested with black gum trees, sassafras and tupelos. She sees nothing manmade, no smoke. She climbs down. Dacey sees a row of orange trees someone abandoned. She picks a ripe orange. Beneath her feet lies a path. She returns to the others to report. Sectioning the orange, she gives each man a piece.

DRISCOLL

See anything?

DACEY

No, it's quiet. But there's a trail that leads south.

LONG

We should hide in the bushes and ambush them.

DRISCOLL

(shakes his head) The captain said to wait here.

They sit in the shade. A finch pecks at sea oats tossing in the breeze. Long lights a pipe. Dacey dashes it out of his hand.

DACEY

Don't.

She dumps the tobacco and stamps it out. Long takes offense and punches her shoulder, grabbing his pipe.

LONG

Don't you ever!

DRISCOLL

Derry's right. The enemy will smell it.

LONG

He'd smell you first. (grumbles) What about these cursed flies? Smoking keeps them off.

A shot rings out and he falls. Dacey is seized from behind. Driscoll swings his musket up and fires. Dacey fights her attacker and frees her sword arm. Jumping back, she draws the saber and swings at the dirty soldier. He wears the remnants of a shirt crossed by cartridge and sword belts, ragged breeches and bare feet. Her thrust slashes his shoulder and he curses. She backs away, circling. More men surround them. Driscoll falls as a volley of shots comes from the trees.

BRITISH REGULAR

Surrender!

Dacey and her three shipmates drop their weapons and are taken captive. Their hands bound behind them, they are prodded to march down the path to the south.

EXT. FLORIDA JUNGLE DAY

After a long, hot march, they come to a camp where Creek Indians and British soldiers mingle with shabby Loyalists of the Rangers. Regulars shove the prisoners into a hut.

INT. THE CHICKEE HUT DAY

Inside the hut made of poles and palm fronds with a dirt floor, the prisoners sit silent, each in his own fear and misery. Time lapse. Light moves across the dirt floor. After several hours, a pounding of hooves thunders close. A large, menacing Ranger comes in. He has several days' growth of stubble, a red shirt that has never been washed, buckskins and breeches, bare legs and buckled shoes. Barrel-chested and squat, he searches each of them and loots all their possessions: a knife in a sheaf, coins, and tobacco. He lays aside the plunder. Running his hands over Dacey, he feels her breasts and an evil smile lights his face. He pulls her to her feet and drags her outside.

EXT. RANGER CAMP DAY

MCGIRTH

(to the guard) This one's mine.

GUARD

But McGirth, the colonel said to wait.

MCGIRTH

We won't be far.

He pulls his grey horse near and bundles Dacey over the saddle. Mounting behind her, he urges the horse to a trot and they jog down the path toward a copse of willows.

EXT. ON THE JUNGLE TRAIL DAY

From Dacey's point of view, upside down view of the saddle belly strap, horse's legs and green fronds of palmetto. Her head bobs so the view is jarring. McGirth jumps off and drops the reins. He flings Dacey down on a hummock and starts to untie her. Stunned, she sinks down and won't move. He kicks her and she folds up her legs.

MCGIRTH

Get up, gal-boy. I have a fancy for you.

DACEY

I'd rather die.

MCGIRTH

Oh, you will.

He picks her up, but she resists, kicking and yelling. Her instincts tell her to fight like a wild Indian. The mare squeals as if she smells a stallion, and high-tails it up the trail. McGirth curses and runs after her. Dacey frees herself from her bonds. McGirth catches his pale horse and swings into the saddle, galloping past Dacey as John Habersham on a white horse, Jackson on a sorrel, and Bowen on a black stallion thunder down. Dacey loses her wits and goggles as a passage from "Revelations" echoes in her head.

VOICEOVER (Dacey)

*"And power was given unto them to kill with the sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth." War, famine, death and pestilence. The four horsemen of the Apocalypse!*

Even though they have come to rescue her, Dacey is frightened to her soul. She stands immobile as they barrel down on her.

OLIVER

Dacey! Give me your hand!

Oliver reaches down his hand and she finally recognizes him and grasps his hand.

Jump up behind me!

He pulls her up onto his stallion. She clambers on and reaches her arms around him. Oliver kicks the horse to a gallop.

The three sailors in the palmetto hut have broken out and armed themselves with swords and a pistol. They run up the trail, pursued by the enemy. Whirling his sword, Brigade Major John Habersham signals his soldiers to surround the enemy. A volley of shots drops two Rangers in a melee of blood and smoke. A shipmate shoots a Ranger, and flees toward the beach. Jackson holds off the pursuers. Another seaman fights a Ranger with his sword, and runs him through. John Habersham leads a charge, forcing the Rangers to retreat into the woods.

EXT. BEACH DAY

They arrive at the boat, where Driscoll lies injured. The rebels hold the Rangers back with musket fire, and take charge of the horses. Oliver collects his men and they prepare to shove off.

OLIVER

Bring Long. We'll bury him at sea.

DACEY

How did you find us?

OLIVER

Elbert's men know the terrain. Are you hurt?

DACEY

No, only a scrape.

OLIVER

That was a scrape all right. Pull, my bullies!

Oliver takes an oar next to Dacey and everyone rows except Driscoll, who lies groaning in the bottom of the boat.

OLIVER

(confides) Something told me you were in danger. I asked Elbert for horses, and he sent John Habersham to guide us.

EXT. ABOARD THE SCHOONER NIGHT

Oliver reads the service and they commit Long's body to the deep. After Dacey was captured by Brown's Rangers, she seems spooked. Oliver guards her and keeps her close.

INT. WARDROOM OF THE SCHOONER NIGHT

Oliver holds Dacey tight and strokes her hair.

DACEY

(insisting) I'm not a fragile flower.

OLIVER

Admit it, you were scared. So was I. If anything happened to you, my life would be hell.

DACEY

(wryly) Don't worry about McGirth. I think he likes his horse better.

She coaxes a laugh from him.

OLIVER

How is it that every time I let you have your way, you get in trouble, but you always manage to make me laugh!

DACEY

I'm fine, Nolly, really.

INT. BELOW DECKS NIGHT

Dacey creeps into her bunk. The peril she faced overwhelms her and tears flood her eyes. Oliver hears her smothered sobs and comes to her bunk.

OLIVER

What's wrong, darling?

DACEY

I've never been with a man. I didn't want him to be my first.

OLIVER

I'll be your first, and your last, and your only, if you'll have me.

He soothes her fears. They kiss, and he lies down with his head on her breast.

DACEY

My love. (whispers)

She strokes his hair. His slow, stroking touch inflames her desire.

Don't stop. Take me.

The lovers thrill with passion but in silence. Finally Dacey knows how it felt to be satisfied with her man in her arms.

EXT. ABOARD SCHOONER OFF FLORIDA COAST DAY

The *Liberty* sails south along the coast. Oliver looks for the enemy camp and sees a plume of smoke. One arm in a sling, Driscoll measures the cannon bore with gunner's calipers and matches it to the shot.

OLIVER

Bring the port guns to bear. Broadside!

They train their cannons on the land.

DRISCOLL

(shouts) Fire!

They bombard Brown's encampment. The ship rocks with the recoil.

Pour fire on 'em, matey! (shouts)

Driscoll puts a match to the touch-hole. The cannon fires and recoils. The wad sizzles as the gun crew reloads.

DRISCOLL

(grins at Dacey) You jump every time.

She giggles at her own nerves. Coy, she feels sensitive, and more feminine after last night. Stiffening her spine, she resumes her duties.

OLIVER

Come about.

Salty swings the wheel and the boom comes around. They set a course north. Falling in with them, the pilot boat sends over a dispatch. Oliver opens it.

OLIVER

It's from Elbert. Georgia Continentals have captured Frederica and taken British prisoners. Major John Habersham has control of the fort. Salty, set a course for Saint Simon's.

EXT. OFF FREDERICA, GEORGIA APRIL 1778 DAY

Colonel Samuel Elbert arrives in a gunboat and the bosun pipes him aboard. Rebels man three galleys. Seventy feet at the waterline, they each carry two lateen sails, and a large cannon in the front. Captain Bowen salutes his fellow officer.

OLIVER

My best regards to your family.

ELBERT

(smiles) Yes, my wife Elizabeth is safely out of Georgia, along with her sister Isabella.

OLIVER

(nods) Glad they made it out. Let's meet in the wardroom.

He gestures to the companionway ladder and leads the way below.

INT. WARDROOM DAY

A candle burns in an onion lamp over the chart table.

OLIVER

The enemy strength is a brigantine of twelve guns, the *Hinchinbrook*, the sloop *Rebecca*, and a prize brig called the *Hatter*, also a frigate called the *Galetea*. Our galleys could capture the whole fleet, but they're unsuited for use on the high seas. We must drive the British into shallow water.

He spreads out a chart on the table.

SAM ELBERT

(nods) The last time we tried this, we were out-manned. The crew had swamp fever, and headwinds prevented us from cutting through the narrows.

OLIVER

With the *Liberty* and captured prizes, we could take the frigate. She has forty four guns and a crew of two hundred, and has captured thirty American ships. With her, we could overthrow Saint Augustine. That fort is the stronghold of the British army that threatens to march on Savannah.

Brightening, Elbert replies with enthusiasm.

SAM ELBERT

I have long sought to attack the *Galetea* and cripple her consort. They've been harassing us for two years.

OLIVER

I've summoned the captains for a briefing.

The captains of the galleys arrive in the wardroom. John Hardee of the *Washington* sips a cordial. John Cutler Braddock of the *Lee* keeps his own counsel. Archibald Hatcher of the *Bulloch* engages the others with light-hearted talk. Bowen traces a route on the chart.

OLIVER

We'll drive them into the Frederica River, pen them up like sheep, and when the tide goes out, we'll give them a shearing.

ELBERT

Good plan, Bowen. With your schooner, you can guard the entrance to the river, in case the *Galetea* comes around to protect her sheep.

Oliver bristles at the implied command.

OLIVER

Mister Saltero can man the *Liberty* while I command the galleys.

ELBERT

If you remain aboard, you'll have a better vantage point to conduct the battle. It's a key position from which to guard against a rear action by the frigate. What's your draft?

Oliver cocks his head and thinks it over.

OLIVER

Yes, Colonel. I see your point. I don't want to run aground. But allow me to remind you that the naval forces are entirely distinct from and independent of the land service. But since your men are aboard, you will command the mission.

Elbert bristles as Bowen makes his position clear. They are of equal rank but Bowen commands the naval forces.

ELBERT

Agreed.

EXT. ON DECK NIGHT

The crew watches the galley captains and Elbert return to the galleys.

OLIVER

(gruffly, to his crew) Any of you who want to join in the fray, take a boat and board a galley.

The men exchange glances. They want to get in on the action.

INT. BELOW DECKS NIGHT

The night before the battle, Dacey comes to his bunk. Oliver confides in her.

OLIVER

I'll let him have his moment of glory. Elbert is so intent because he lost to them before.

DACEY

It's very decent of you, Oliver.

She smiles, teasing him with the feather of a quill pen. He snatches it away from her and they tussle on the bunk. He draws the curtain.

OLIVER

When men are facing death, how can you make love?

DACEY

What better time to make love? Let's celebrate here and now. Come my love, forget tomorrow.

EXT. ON DECK DAY

At first light, the *Liberty* sails into the Frederica River.

OLIVER

Dacey, heave the lead.

She stands in the chains to sight the mark on the lead-line at the surface: three strips of leather.

DACEY

By the mark, three fathoms.

OLIVER

And it's high tide. It's shallow here in the springtime. (to the crew) Drop anchor.

Dacey climbs back up on deck and helps drop the anchor.

OLIVER

Any of you men who want to join in the battle, take a ship's boat to the galley *Bulloch.*

Five men step forward and lower the boat, rowing to the *Bulloch.* The wind drops to a dead calm as the galleys, rowed by freemen and slaves, approach the enemy ranged in their order of battle. Aboard the *Liberty* at Pike's Bluff, Bowen chuckles to see the enemy sails hang limp. He hands Dacey the spyglass. The British can't maneuver to board the galleys, nor can they arrive in range to bring the *Hinchinbrook*'s fourteen four-pounders to bear. The galleys' eighteen-pounders are splintering their hulls.

Time lapse. Becalmed, the British vessels suffer a cannonade for hours. Oliver circles the deck like a dog in a pen. As the tide ebbs, the enemy run downriver, trying to reach St. Simon's Sound where the *Galetea* waits. All three run aground at Raccoon Gut. Surrounded by the American fleet and given a choice between capture by the Americans or court martial, the British seamen strike their colors and abandon ship. They flee to Jekyll Island in their ships' boats and scatter. Some row six or seven miles to the mouth of the river, and are picked up by the *Galetea* in St. Simon's Sound.

EXT. ON DECK OF THE SCHOONER NIGHT

Bowen's crewmen return, excited from victory and full of stories.

JESSUP

We aimed the cannon at the *Rebecca* and dismasted her.

WIGGINS

Compliments of Colonel Elbert.

He hands Oliver Bowen a sheaf of ships' papers, and three white Royal Navy ensigns with the Union Jack in the canton, and the red cross of Saint George. Scorched and tattered, the rags of British pride give Oliver a feeling of elation mingled with regret.

OLIVER

Anyone hurt?

JESSUP

The captain of the *Hinchinbrook* drowned. He abandoned ship. Abandoned this life, rather than surrender.

WIGGINS

Drowned like a kitten with his eyes open. Thought he was alive at first, but his face was nose under and he wasn't moving. We helped them load him into a boat.

OLIVER

Thank you, men. Good work. Volunteers for the prize crew?

Several men step forward.

Take possession of the schooner, the sloop and the brig. Captain Braddock will transport prisoners aboard the *Lee*.

JESSUP

Two of the captured vessels are not seaworthy. The sloop needs a new mast stepped.

OLIVER

Have them docked for repairs.

Wiggins hands Bowen a parchment.

WIGGINS

A copy of Elbert's dispatch to General Bob Howe.

OLIVER

(reads) "I have the happiness to inform you that about 10 o'clock this forenoon, the Brigantine Hinchinbrooke, the Sloop Rebecca, and a prize Brig, all struck the British Tryant's colours and surrendered to the American arms. We captured Fort Frederica. You must imagine what my feelings were, to see our three little men-of-war going on to the attack of these vessels who have spread terror on our coast, but our metal damped the courage of these heroes, who took to their boats. We have not one man hurt. Captain Ellis of the Hinchinbrooke is drowned, and Captain Mowbray of the Rebecca made his escape."

JESSUP

He didn't mention you at all, captain Bowen.

OLIVER

(irritated) Why state the obvious?

Boats arrive full of rebel soldiers overcome with malaria, heat, bad water, sunburn, and salt meat. Bowen takes them aboard. The sea air has a healthful influence. Spread out on deck under shade sails, the sick men recover.

Time lapse. As the men gain strength, some of them lend a hand sailing the schooner. A pilot boat pulls alongside and Wiggins takes a dispatch.

WIGGINS

(handing Bowen a parchment) Captured a dispatch from the enemy.

OLIVER

(smiling) The British report this engagement as "the Debacle at Raccoon Gut." They are left with only one frigate to defend East Florida.

INT. BELOW DECKS IN THE WARDROOM NIGHT

DACEY

Commodore Bowen, if you please.

OLIVER

Damn me. I missed an opportunity to sail into battle. I won't miss another one.

DACEY

What will you do?

OLIVER

Now that we have four galleys and a schooner, I'll pursue the frigate that lies at anchor north of Jekyll Island...

He thumps the map on the chart table.

...right about here. We shall treat the enemy with the attention they deserve and we so ardently wish to bestow.

EXT. AT SEA OFF JEKYLL ISLAND DAY

Three Continental ships, the *Hinchinbrook*, the sloop and the schooner surround the *Galetea*.

OLIVER

She takes counsel of her fears, weighs anchor and flees. Crowd on sail, boys!

They chase the frigate past Amelia Narrows where she escapes. They sail into Cumberland Sound at Saint Mary's, while the frigate takes refuge under the guns of Saint Augustine.

DACEY

We could never outgun a frigate.

OLIVER

(bursting with rage and frustration) Even if my ship were blown to oblivion, I want to fight. I've been held back and made useless by a man I trusted. Bring her about.

Everyone ducks as the boom swings around.

OLIVER

We will take the sick soldiers to Port Royal.

Time lapse. They sail north to South Carolina passing Sapelo, Saint Catherine's, Green Island, Skidaway, Tybee, and Dafusky. Rounding Hilton Head, they sail into Port Royal Sound. On a hot summer day, they debark the soldiers at Parris Island Barracks. A sloop flying the Georgia ensign approaches and lowers a boat. Salty comes up to the helm with a dispatch. Oliver tears it open.

OLIVER

(fuming) I am summoned to Savannah. "General Bob Howe and Governor Houstoun demand Commodore Bowen appear before a court of inquiry and explain his conduct."

After the bad news, Oliver doesn't care about anything. His voice sounds flat, distant as a stranger. Nothing cheers him. Attempts at humor fail. Dacey stops talking to him. The crew goes about their duties in a tense silence.

EXT. DOCKSIDE IN SAVANNAH DAY

Dressed in her go-ashore gown, Dacey follows Oliver up River Street. Morose and uncommunicative, he walks as one in a trance.

INT. GOVERNMENT HOUSE DAY

A crowd of townspeople fill the chairs of Wright's former dining room. Members of the Executive Council sit behind a table up front. A thorny Oliver Bowen enters the room. Dacey finds a chair in the back and looks around at the assembly. She sees a gloating Dr. Wells.

State governor John Houstoun recognizes Bowen.

JOHN HOUSTOUN

You will please explain your actions in Florida.

OLIVER BOWEN

The *Liberty* and our galleys captured three ships: the *Hinchinbrook*, the *Rebecca*, and the *Hatter*. The real heroes of the battle were the captains of the galleys.

JOHN HOUSTOUN

I trust they turned over to you the ships' papers.

OLIVER BOWEN

Yes. I sent them to the Continental Marine Committee.

JOHN HOUSTOUN

And where are the ships?

OLIVER BOWEN

Samuel Elbert has two of them, and the third is in drydock, undergoing repairs.

JOHN HOUSTOUN

So you have no ships or papers, nothing to show for this Florida adventure. All we received is a dispatch from Samuel Elbert.

Bowen takes the captured ensigns out of his jacket and tosses them on the floor. A hubbub as everyone stands up to see the ensigns. A man in the front row holds up the battle-tattered flags.

JOHN HOUSTOUN

Resolved, Commodore Bowen is to use the fleet only to protect the Georgia coast.

The motion is carried unanimously.

OLIVER BOWEN

(retorts) Savannah will never be safe as long as the British hold Saint Augustine.

Houstoun bangs the gavel.

JOHN HOUSTOUN

You are out of order.

Dr. Wells perches on a bench, listening intently and grinning. Loyalists who have infiltrated the crowd look pleased. Dacey wishes Oliver would mind his temper, but knows he will lash out, given the provocation.

JOHN HOUSTOUN

You and your fleet are under our command, and you will obey our orders.

By now Oliver gnashes his teeth.

OLIVER BOWEN

I have here a letter of congratulations from the Marine Committee. (reads) "We highly esteem your prudence in the conduct of the squadron under your command and applaud the activity and spirit of your officers and men on a late occasion in Capturing the enemies Vessels on the Coast of Georgia which we request you will signify to them in the name of this Committee.

We are sir with much regard

Your very Humble servants--"

JOHN HOUSTOUN

You are out of order!

OLIVER BOWEN

I take my orders from the military, who supersede your authority. If you don't understand captain's discretion, I shall leave Savannah and seek out some stout-hearted patriots who know how to conduct a war.

The chamber buzzes with comment.

COMMENTS IN THE CROWD

Are you calling us cowards, sir?

He as much as called him a coward, and stupid.

That's an insult.

DR. WELLS

Call him out, Governor! Demand satisfaction!

Houstoun sits with his saturnine face red, and bangs the gavel.

JOHN HOUSTOUN

The meeting will come to order!

Dr. Wells basks in the success of his efforts to confound the opposition.

VOICEOVER (Dacey)

(bitterly) *How simple it is to divide the Whigs and get them fighting amongst themselves. It's like he threw the Golden Apple of Discord.*

JOHN HOUSTOUN

Captain Bowen, I find you in high contempt of the executive authority of this state. I condemn your disobedience, and I suspend you from command.

Oliver Bowen walks out.

JOHN HOUSTOUN

(to his council) Seize his ship, and send for Job Pray. He will sail the *Liberty* on coastal guard duty.

INT. THE PIRATES HOUSE DAY

Oliver Bowen sits at a window table, drowning his vexation in rum. Joseph Habersham enters and walks over to him.

JOSEPH HABERSHAM

Slow down, mate. You're half seas over the bay.

Sitting down beside him, Habersham flourishes a copy of the *Georgia Gazette*.

It's all here: Samuel Elbert's great victory at Saint Simon's Island.

Bowen stares at him with bloodshot eyes.

OLIVER

I'll be damned!

JOSEPH

"Elbert captures three ships, also the town. But the British escape in their boats and are taken aboard the *Galetea*."

Oliver slams his fist on the table.

OLIVER

Sam Elbert's a soldier! I commanded the fleet.

JOSEPH

(nods) Yet they give him sole credit. Our enemies have been busy, and I don't mean the British. Are you in need of a vessel, Captain Bowen?

Oliver looks at his friend, then toward the daylight with hope dawning in his eyes.

OLIVER

What can I do with a vessel but sail away?

JOSEPH

We will guard the shipping in Savannah harbor. The British are trying to seize our ships.

Oliver sinks down at the word "harbor."

OLIVER

I hope to go to sea. Capture prizes.

JOSEPH

That will come in time. Let's look for a ship.

Dr. Wells and two Tories come into the tavern.

OLIVER

More rum! Never mind, I'll get it myself.

He descends stairs into the rum cellar and Joseph follows, admonishing.

JOSEPH

You've had enough.

INT. RUM CELLAR DAY

Oliver signals for silence. Beyond an arched doorway, a stepping stone leads underground. Lighting a lantern, they walk on boards over puddles of water, feeling their way along the brick and mortar walls of the tunnel. A pinhole of light ahead gradually grows larger. After a dark passage, they emerge one block from the river.

EXT. RIVER STREET DAY

Oliver and Joseph walk down River Street, sizing up vessels they can sail as privateers. They pick out two likely ships belonging to the Habersham firm.

JOSEPH

How about the *Horizon* brig for you?

OLIVER

She's a good Rhode Island ship. Mayhap she's as homesick as I am.

JOSEPH

She's yours. Jemme will set you up with an account to fit her out.

They shake hands.

OLIVER

Thank you, Joe.

JOSEPH

Savannah is a fickle mistress. She has disowned us, but she will be grateful to us yet.

EXT. NEWPORT RHODE ISLAND JULY DAY

The French fleet under Count d'Estaing enters Narragansett Bay. The battle of Rhode Island rages, then the Americans evacuate. The French sail away and the British occupy Newport. Jabez and his family flee in their carriage. The British take over his house as their headquarters.

INT. SAVANNAH GOVERNMENT HOUSE DAY

JOHN HOUSTOUN

Under the Treason and Confiscation Act, the Bonaventure Plantation that belonged to Josiah Tatnall and his wife, Mary Mulryne, is sold to John Habersham as a reward for his courageous actions in battle.

John Habersham steps forward and accepts the deed to Bonaventure.

EXT. SAVANNAH RIVER DECEMBER 1778 DAY

The British fleet under Sir Hyde Parker anchors off Tybee. The *Phoenix* (44 guns), the *Rose* (24), the *Fowey* (24), the *Vigilant* (28), the brig *Keppel*, the sloop *Greenwich*, the galley *Comet*, and transports carrying 3,500 men descend upon Savannah. The squadron sails to Girardeau's plantation and prepares to land.

At Girardeau's Bluff, Samuel Elbert rides up to General Robert Howe and Colonel George Walton.

SAM ELBERT

We need to reinforce this bluff.

BOB HOWE

Negative. My men are ill and exhausted from Florida. They're guarding the Thunderbolt Road across the marsh. We barricaded the bridge and dug a trench.

SAM ELBERT

Then my brigade will hold the left line.

COLONEL GEORGE WALTON

I have a hundred militia at the crossroads of Liberty and Bull Streets. I'll hold the right.

Walton points out a path through the swamps.

(to Howe) You better defend that path.

Oblivious to his advice, Howe waves him away.

EXT. SAVANNAH DAY

At dawn, with an eerie skirl of bagpipes, the 71st Highland Regiment marches up Brewton Hill. The Americans open fire. An officer and several Scots fall. Colonel Maitland's regiment follows and reinforces the Scots. The light infantry, New York Tory volunteers, and a battalion of Hessians form line of battle.

BRITISH COLONEL

(to his scouts) Find a way to flank General Howe.

An old black man named Quanimo Dolly shows the British the winding pass through the marsh. Commanded by Sir James Baird, the light infantry and New York Tory volunteers follow him on the narrow track to the White Bluff Road, and attack Walton's force from the rear. A British colonel pushes his artillery to the hilltop and fires on the Americans. Between two fires, the Americans retreat.

Walton's force secures the causeway to the Augusta road, leading across Musgrove Creek west of town. Some of the men retreat across the creek. When Howe's men arrive, the British have possession. Colonel Elbert's men are shot and bayoneted as they run through town. Blocked from the causeway, they walk into the rice-fields at high tide, and thirty drown. Two hundred are captured by Highlanders, who disarm and rob them.

GENERAL BOB HOWE

Evacuate! Evacuate the city!

The Georgia Brigade is cut off and suffers heavy losses.

EXT. SAVANNAH HARBOR DECEMBER 1778 DAY

Sir Hyde Parker sails into town and captures three ships, three brigs, three sloops, and 126 prisoners. Another 83 Americans are killed to the Royalists' five. The British captures officers, men, and the colors, along with cannon, mortars, arms and powder.

EXT. BRIER CREEK MARCH 1779 DAY

British troops under Lieutenant Colonel James Mark Prevost march north from St. Augustine. In March, at the Battle of Brier Creek, he defeats the Americans. John Habersham holds the line until he and Sam Elbert are captured.

John is exchanged for a British officer.

EXT. SAVANNAH DAY

Victorious Brevet Brigadier-General Prevost takes over an estate north of Broughton Street for his headquarters. In the great room, he sits composing a proclamation. British colonel, Thomas Brown and Dan McGirth await orders.

PREVOST

Now that I'm governor, royal rule has resumed. A reward of ten guineas will be paid for every committeeman or Assemblyman taken within the limits of Georgia; and two guineas for every lurking villain from Carolina. Food and clothing will be sold only to those who take an oath of allegiance to the King. Anyone who complains will be arrested and deprived of their property. Horses will be commandeered. Ladies are to be confined in their homes, under guard.

PREVOST

Colonel Campbell, continue on with your troops to Wilkes County. Colonel Brown, the King's Rangers are in charge of the city. Lord Cornwallis has issued a standing order that any man who has sworn to lay down his arms, and takes them up again, shall be hanged.

Brown and McGirth exchange a gleeful smile and head outside to start their reign of terror.

EXT. SAVANNAH DAY

Loyalists and British troops plunder Savannah, insult the women, and bayonet citizens. The Rangers round up Jon Bryan, Mordecai Sheftall and George Wells and herd them onto a ship.

INT. PRISON SHIP DAY

Colonel Thomas Brown conducts a drumhead court, Dan McGirth at his side.

COLONEL THOMAS BROWN

Jon Bryan, we have a new home for you. On a prison hulk in New York.

British sailors take Jon Bryan away.

Mordecai Sheftall, you are to serve out your parole in Sunbury. Don't show your face in Savannah again.

MORDECAI

You villains!

DAN MCGIRTH

Would you rather be drawn and quartered?

Sailor takes away Mordecai. McGirth whispers to Brown, pointing at Dr. Wells.

BROWN

Release George Wells. Sorry for your inconvenience, Doctor Wells.

With a gleeful smile, Dr. Wells goes ashore.

EXT. THE PINK HOUSE DAY

Dacey, Bertha and Henry the butler carry baggage to a carriage. Joseph and James Habersham help load the carriage.

JEMME

I saw my name on the British enemies list. I'm going to South Carolina. I'll join our wives and children up there.

JOSEPH

Anything you need me to take care of for you?

JEMME

The wife and children of Lachlan McIntosh are trapped in their house on Oglethorpe, corner of Drayton.

DACEY

I'll get them out.

EXT. RIVER STREET DAY

Townspeople hang rotting from trees. Vultures tear at the corpses. Dressed as a boy, Dacey scouts around until she locates a four-wheeled trap hidden in a stable, along with a barrel of grain.

INT. STABLE DAY

The barrel is nearly empty. Dacey reaches her hand in, disturbing a large cockroach, and takes a pocketful of grain.

EXT. RIVER STREET DAY

Walking down by the docks, she comes to a seafarers' tavern with a scarred and skinny dapple-grey mare tied up to the hitching post.

DACEY

Hello, Grey Goose. (softly) What happened to you, you poor, starving thing?

Her hands tremble as she unties the horse and offers it some grain.

DACEY

I know you can fly and I need you to fly for me. I'm a bit of a wild goose myself.

The hungry horse nibbles the grain and nuzzles her hand for more. Dacey coaxes her a few steps, jumps on and rides away.

INT. WEAVERS' SHOP DAY

Dacey looks over the weavers' pots of dye.

DACEY

I need a pail of black dye, to dye some clothes for mourning.

INT. STABLE DAY

Leading the mare into a stable, she feeds her some grain. While she is eating, Dacey picks up a curry comb. With "black jack" and sumac berries, she stains her hide, mane and tail.

EXT. OGLETHORPE AVENUE NIGHT

Dressed in her feminine garb, Dacey drives the trap up Oglethorpe Avenue. Tall lilac trees and live oaks grow in the center of the boulevard. She stops at the corner of Drayton, where a guard stands outside the stone steps to the McIntosh house.

DACEY

Good day, handsome. Would you like to try my wares?

GUARD

(smiles) What have you there?

DACEY

Hot cross buns.

She lures the guard into an alley, and knocks him down with a rolling pin.

DACEY

Hurry!

She leads Mistress McIntosh and four children, two boys and two girls, out of the damaged brick house.

SARAH MCINTOSH

Come on, George, come on, Hampton! Hurry up, Esther! Where's Catherine? Here you are!

Sarah McIntosh swings her children up into the wagon. Dacey flicks the reins.

DACEY

Have you no shoes?

SARAH MCINTOSH

We would march barefoot to Carolina to escape those brutal soldiers.

As they trot down West Broad, a cannonball hits the second story of Sheftalls' house. The mare shies, but Dacey calms it. They crouch down until the rubble settles, and part ways at the corner. Sarah takes the wagon.

EXT. RIVER STREET DAY

Dressed in her sea-faring rig, Dacey is boarding a sloop to go upriver when McGirth spots her.

MCGIRTH

You she-devil! Did you steal my horse?

DACEY

Just borrowed her, is all.

She leaps from the sloop to a fishing boat. He leaps after her.

MCGIRTH

I tracked her to the weavers, and they told me you bought some dye. What did you do to my horse?

Her hand feels a gaff hook and she keeps talking to distract him.

DACEY

Liberated her. (taunts) She was tired of you.

He draws a pistol and approaches. Swinging the hook on a line, she strikes McGirth in the arm and ties the rope to the mast.

That'll hold you.

She kicks his pistol overboard.

MCGIRTH

(bawls) You'll hang for this!

He struggles to free himself. She jumps back to the sloop and gets underway. She is out in the middle of the river when McGirth races down the docks, looking for a boat to chase her. Nobody can accommodate him and he is last seen nursing his wound and tearing his hair out.

EXT. GOVERNMENT HOUSE JULY DAY

The populace greets Sir James Wright, returning as the Royal Governor. He steps from his carriage, dusting off his jacket, beaming with friendly joy to be home again.

SIR JAMES WRIGHT

It's like I never left. They certainly took good care of my mansion.

Colonel Thomas Brown salutes the governor.

SIR JAMES WRIGHT

These are my orders. The King's Rangers will move on to Augusta.

With a slight bow, Colonel Brown summons his men and they march away. Wright watches them go, inscrutable, and the townspeople smile with relief and give three cheers.

INT. PINK HOUSE DAY

British officers arrive to occupy the Pink House. James Habersham Senior's portrait smiles a welcome.

BRITISH COLONEL

This family is loyal to the Crown. Honor this house and don't damage a stick.

INT. RAE'S HALL SEPTEMBER 1779 NIGHT

At dinner in Rae's Hall, Joseph Habersham carves the roast and Mandy serves Yorkshire pudding.

JOSEPH

(to Oliver) I'm moving my family from South Carolina to Virginia. (chewing, to Mandy) This beef is rather stringy.

MANDY

That's because it's horse.

Joseph harrumphs, but swallows the meat. Dacey spits into her napkin.

JOSEPH

Please everyone, sit down with us.

He pours wine into crystal glasses and hands them around. Mandy sits down gingerly with her friendly rival, Bertha. Henry takes a fatherly interest in pretty young Polite. He helps her to a seat beside him at the foot of the table. Oliver sits at the head with Joseph. Dacey sits between Oliver and Derry.

JOSEPH

You can all come north with us, if you like.

Oliver shakes his head.

Aren't you getting out?

OLIVER

No. While Rhode Island is in British hands, I might as well stay here.

JOSEPH

(to Dacey) You are welcome to come with us, or stay here until you find a place.

He looks from Dacey to Oliver, whose expression is unreadable.

Derry, Mandy, Bertha, Henry, and Polite, you can all stay here.

DACEY

My place is with Oliver--

DERRY

No thank you, Mister Habersham. I plan to join the Rebels.

When Dacey hears her brother, she gasps. Oliver looks at her thoughtfully as she widens her eyes at Derry.

OLIVER

Thank you, Joe. I'll be at sea, but it's good to know Dacey can go with you.

Dacey opens her mouth to protest, but he shoots her a dark look. She grasps his arm and whispers.

DACEY

If I can't be with you, then I must stay with my brother.

OLIVER

You can't stay with him. He's going to war.

JOSEPH

Dacey, I have something for you.

He hands her the indenture papers.

You're free to go. Godspeed.

DACEY

I thank you, Mister Habersham.

Dacey unfolds the parchment. She reads her name, and the legal discharge, signed by Isabella and Joseph. She feels torn.

Godspeed to you, too.

JOSEPH

Won't you come with us?

Biting her lips, Dacey shakes her head. Her eyes rove from Derry to Oliver, beseeching, but neither man will meet her eye.

POLITE

I want to stay with Miss Dacey.

JOSEPH

Well, Polite, Isabella trained you for a governess and she was hoping you'd come live with us.

The child looks like she is going to cry.

POLITE

Please, Master Joseph. I'd rather stay here.

Dacey stands up and puts her arm around the girl.

DACEY

I'll take care of her. We'll be here when you get back.

JOSEPH

Bertha? Are you coming with us? Because we need a cook.

BERTHA

I sure will come with you, Mister Habersham.

The other servants elect to stay.

OLIVER

(to Joseph) Where's your brother John?

JOSEPH

He was captured again and arranged his own exchange. He wrote to Governor Wright, "Your Excellency, I suggest I be exchanged for Colonel Munro, a prisoner of the United States." John was set free and has rejoined his regiment.

OLIVER

He always was a lucky one. And James?

JOSEPH

He's in Carolina, but may join us in Virginia if things get too hot there. To the Liberty Boys!

Joseph raises his glass, and everyone drinks a toast.

EXT. RAE'S HALL GARDEN NIGHT

Outside in the garden, Oliver confronts Dacey.

OLIVER

Go with Habersham!

When she is angry, her brogue becomes pronounced.

DACEY

You're not my husband. You don't rule me. I'll obey you on board, but on land, I'm my own mistress!

She waves the paper in his face.

I'm my own mistress now!

He grabs her by the wrist, but she winces and he lets go.

OLIVER

(in an even tone) Whether on land or sea, a captain is responsible for all his crew. Legally I'm like a father to his children. My crew has stayed loyal and whatever ship I sail, they sail with me. When next I call the crew, will you step up? Will you be one of the Liberties?

DACEY

Liberty, a fine word. What do I know of Liberty? I do what I'm told, is all.

OLIVER

We all have to obey those in command and the will of God.

DACEY

I don't know what God had in mind to trap me this way.

He paces a few steps and swings around.

OLIVER

Do you think I'd have you as crew when you show me such scorn?

DACEY

I don't scorn you, Oliver. I love and honor you.

OLIVER

Then go with Habersham, for God's sake!

DACEY

I cannot. I must stay with my brother.

OLIVER

Savannah is too dangerous. Here's your chance to go north.

DACEY

I'm not afraid, and I will stay here with the servants.

Her defiance infuriates him.

OLIVER

Farewell.

He walks away. She stands there bereft, clutching her freedom.

EXT. RAE'S HALL DOCK DAY

Salty comes upriver on a sloop. Dacey stands on the dock, catches the bow line and throws it over a cleat.

SALTY

Captain Bowen, he captures vessels along the coast, and takes the provisions they had for the British.

DACEY

Does he ever speak of me?

SALTY

No, he don't speak of you, but he keeps your hair ribbon right here.

He strikes his shirt pocket.

DACEY

(smiles) Has Joseph Habersham returned?

SALTY

Yes, he saw his family safe, and he has a ship, and he and Captain Bowen, together they fight the British who try to capture shipping in the port. (whispers) The French fleet has arrived in Savannah River. The Americans and French say they will retake the town.

Derry Flynn walks up dressed in a green coat and buff breeches, linsey-woolsey stockings and buckled shoes, hair braided in a queue. He carries a haversack and a canteen. Dacey tries one last time to talk him out of enlisting.

DACEY

(to Derry, arguing) They'll have awful casualties. Don't risk your life.

DERRY

(lightly) You can nurse me. (to Salty) Can I ride with you down to the camp?

DACEY

I'm going with you.

EXT. BACK RIVER DAY

They sail down to the camp with Salty and disembark. On the riverbank fires burn near tripods of muskets, swords and rifles. The troops are jubilant. They welcome Derry into their ranks.

SERGEANT

It won't be long now. General Ben Lincoln is sending reinforcements.

A killdeer hurries along the ground, peeping its cry. John Habersham rides up and salutes Dacey and her brother.

JOHN HABERSHAM

(to the sergeant) Give this man a musket.

EXT. SAVANNAH HARBOR DAY

Joseph Habersham in his schooner leads Count d'Estaing into port with twenty battleships, two 50-gun men-of-war, eleven frigates, five small vessels, and 5,000 soldiers. Meanwhile the French land 3,000 troops at Burley.

The trumpeters of Count d'Estaing summon the town in the name of the King of France. He stands at the dock in front of his flagship the *Languedoc* (80 guns), 184 feet long, its two gundecks bristling with cannon. Under a white ensign spangled with gold Fleurs-de-Lis, flush from victory in the West Indies, he is in a boasting mood. His words in French are shouted by a translator equally bombastic.

COUNT D'ESTAING'S INTERPRETER

You see my formidable fleet and great army. You hear of our late success at Saint Vincent and Grenada. We stand ready to attack. Allow me to point out the horrible consequences if you force us to take so desperate a measure. Let us remind General Prevost that he will be responsible for any ill-judged and fruitless opposition. British, surrender the town.

PREVOST

(airily) British soldiers never can think of surrendering under any circumstances without conditions and terms being allowed them.

COUNT D'ESTAING'S INTERPRETER

According to the rules of war, the besieged and not the besiegers are to propose terms.

Consulting with his adjutants, Prevost returns to the dockside.

PREVOST

If the Count will grant us an armistice of 24 hours, we will be happy to consider his terms.

COUNT D'ESTAING'S INTERPRETER

Granted.

INT. PREVOST'S HOUSE NIGHT

At a meeting, Prevost and his officers agree on a strategy.

PREVOST

We are determined to fight Monsieur. Build breastworks in the front and flanks while we await reinforcements.

EXT. SAVANNAH RIVER SEPTEMBER 17 DAY

Under early morning fog, Colonel Maitland's command enters the river with 900 Loyalists. They capture a black oysterman, who pilots the ships through Wall's Cut and Skull Creek. Maitland stands in the bow as the ships moor above the French fleet.

MAITLAND

(smiles) Those rebels will pay for taking my ship.

Loyalist troops land on the bluff, increasing Prevost's force to 2,800 men.

EXT. AMERICAN LINES DAY

Dacey wears an apron over an old calico gown, and pushes her hair under a coif cap as she watches the Americans muster. Three drummer boys, two white and one black, march down the road beating a tattoo on their field drums for assembly. A standard-bearer raises the halberd.

SERGEANT

Attention! Clear arms! Forward march!

To the strains of "Yankee Doodle", the militia sets forth. Hearing the cadence, a little boy marches in place. Dacey felt tears sting her eyes as her brother marches down the Augusta Road. Another regiment falls in.

SERGEANT

Attention! Shoulder arms! Forward march!

Grenadiers of France, Irishmen, Polish lancers, French Creoles and Negro volunteers from Haiti mingle in the ranks. A British officer on a black horse rides along the Continental line, waving his sword and shouting.

BRITISH OFFICER

Go home! Go back to your homes!

The rebels give him a volley from flintlock muskets. Sparks, powder in the pan, an offside shot. On South Broad Street, the British up in the Spring Hill redoubt command the Augusta Road. They keep up heavy fire with a six-pound gun. The rebels mock them, singing "The grand old Duke of York." The Continental captain levels his musket.

CAPTAIN

Aim at the officers.

The rebels arrive at the British fort with its two-level parapet. A trench studded with sharpened stakes surrounds the redoubt. Gunners stand on a firing step raised inside the square of earth with wooden ramparts. Using cannon and mortars from the French fleet, the Americans take pot-shots at the occupying troops. Hessians, Royalists, armed slaves, and Cherokee Indians support the British, running back and forth to supply the redoubt.

EXT. SAVANNAH HARBOR DAY

The ship of the line *Languedoc* and the frigate *Trinité* bombard the town. Their cannon blast deadly broadsides that cut down walls and crumble stone. Dust rises.

Time lapse. By October, the houses are splintered and burned. Even the wharf rats desert River Street. The frigates fire down the line, come about and fire down the other line. Dacey hears the pitiful shrieks of women and children trying to reach the cellars or hide under the bluff.

INT. PREVOST'S HOUSE DAY

Colonel Prevost pens a letter.

PREVOST

"We request permission to allow the women and children to embark on a ship under protection of a French man-of-war." (to his men) Deliver this to Count d'Estaing.

A British soldier takes it, and others come in with an American sergeant.

What's this?

The sergeant hands over a copy of the order to attack.

The rebels plan to attack the redoubt on October 8th at dawn. So we are forewarned. Thank you, sergeant! Reward the man for his useful information.

A soldier hands the sergeant some coins.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD DAY

At dawn, the French advance in three columns with Count d'Estaing at the head.

COUNT D'ESTAING'S INTERPRETER

We will put all the British to the sword.

In the attack on the redoubt, his troops kill dozens of the enemy, but hundreds of French are mowed down by English, Scots, Hessians and Loyalists. The Continentals move up to reinforce the French. The regulars with their red coats, white breeches and paddies over their black boots, jeer at the motley Continentals from their high redoubt. Flipping open their boxes of powder and shot, they drop down on one knee.

CAPTAIN

Present! Fire! Fire!

The British keep up an infernal tattoo.

REBEL

Follow the captain!

The Rebels assemble for a charge, their officer in the middle. Someone shoots his hat off. They march, shouting, and fire at a forty-foot range. The British retort, and four Continentals fall. Wisps of smoke drift into a haze above the battlefield. Some British run around the American flank.

CONTINENTAL OFFICER

(screams) Battalion, volley!

From the hospital across the field, Dacey watches columns of men advance and get bowled down like ninepins; horses impaled on sharp stakes, tumbling into the ditch until it is full of dead animals and men. A Continental fifer falls over the bodies. Count Pulaski dies charging on his black stallion. D'Estaing is borne off the field, wounded, by his interpreter. Dacey dresses his wound and they return to battle.

Sergeant Jasper heroically saves the colors, and gives his life. At ten in the morning, a four-hour truce is granted so the Americans can bury their dead. The British bury corpses in the redoubt.

John Habersham carries Derry off the field. His leg is shattered.

INT. HOSPITAL TENT DAY

Dacey and John Habersham lower Derry to a bench. Surgeon Noble Wimberly Jones glances over.

DERRY

But you know who gets the laugh, you bearing me off.

Derry struggles to smile. Doctor Jones prepares to amputate his leg.

DR. JONES

How do you feel, soldier?

DERRY

I 've felt better.

When Jones applies the saw, he bawls with pain.

JOHN HABERSHAM

(heartless) Die hard, soldier. Die hard.

Habersham returns to the fray. Dacey stares after him.

VOICEOVER (Dacey)

*I could seek in vain for a glimmer of the warm-hearted boy I used to know, in that cynical, war-hardened veteran.*

Dr. Jones gives Derry a tincture of morphine. Dacey holds his hand and prays. The doctor twists a tourniquet around his thigh, but Derry has lost too much blood. A smile crosses his face as his spirit lifts away.

DERRY

I'm flying. Father!

DR. JONES

All in a day's work.

DACEY

(to her brother) Derry! Derry!

DR. JONES

He's gone. Let him go.

DACEY

No. No!

Dr. Jones closes her brother's eyes. Helpless, she looks from her brother to the doctor. She sweeps at her apron as if to brush away the blood.

DR. JONES

(gentle) Clear away.

They lift the body off the bench and lay it on a blanket. An injured redcoat is lowered to the bench. Dacey glares at him, but he is just a boy. She goes outside.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD DAY

REBELS

Huzzah! Huzzah! Huzzah!

They form up again with muskets shouldered.

CAPTAIN

(yells) Fix bayonets!

REBELS

Let me rise! Let go, you bastards!

They charge the redoubt, into a blast of grapeshot. A British officer is shot off his stallion. The bay horse stands over him. A Loyalist woman starts to lead the horse away, but it rears and breaks free, trotting toward the medical tent. Dacey sees the horse Riley as it stands whinnying, nervous from the smell of blood. She catches the bridle and the doctor helps her load Derry's body across the saddle.

EXT. SAVANNAH CHURCHYARD DAY

Leading the horse, Dacey walks to the Catholic church.

DACEY

We need a burial plot.

PRIEST

We are full.

DACEY

Where can my brother be buried?

The priest points to a ditch by the side of the road, serving as a mass grave.

Then he won't be in consecrated ground!

PRIEST

I'll read the prayers over him.

DACEY

Save your prayers.

She walks further with her sad burden, to Christ Church. The sexton leads her horse inside the cemetery and eases her brother's body down beside an open grave. After remaining calm throughout the crisis, she breaks down and sobs her heart out.

DACEY

My brother! My brother!

The bay horse spooks and gallops away. Dacey watches it go.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD DAY

The Colonials storm the fort and fire. The British form up and defend.

SERGEANT

(screams) Right right right, right right.

The Americans retreat. The victors pound their drums.

INT. GOVERNOR'S HOUSE DAY

General Prevost meets with Governor Sir James Wright.

PREVOST

Colonel Maitland, whose reinforcement saved us, has died. We lost 55 men to the rebels' 745.

SIR JAMES WRIGHT

I declare October the 29th a day of public thanksgiving to Almighty God for his divine protection in the late deliverance from the united efforts of rebellion and our natural enemies.

PREVOST

Never did the rebel gentry and their allies meet with a greater disappointment. We have acquired glory and our enemies disgrace.

EXT. SAVANNAH BACK RIVER DAY

Oliver sails a sloop upriver to Rae's Hall and finds the house burned to the foundations. He searches for Dacey at Brampton, where a lone aged Negro comes to the door. Oliver recognizes him from the Pink House.

OLIVER

Henry, have you seen Dacey?

HENRY

Yes, sir.

Henry shows him to the slave quarters where Dacey is hiding with slave preacher Andrew Bryan and dozens of slaves in the ruins of the tabby cabins. She runs to his arms and he holds her.

OLIVER

Thank God you're alive!

ANDREW

The Rangers come up the South Coast Road, lootin' and burning. They come to Brampton and we outnumbered them Rangers. They offered us our freedom, but nobody would go. We heard we'd be sold in the West Indies. We was friendly, but we said, `No thank you, we are gonna stay on here.'

ANDREW

We sure had them Rangers confused. I led the folks in a prayer, and when those Rangers caught me preaching, they gave me twenty lashes, and then they took off.

OLIVER

You're a brave man, Andrew. God bless you.

DACEY

When they arrived at Rae's Hall, I was up a tree, and Polite was hiding in the pig-sty. It took us two days to bathe the stench off of her.

They laugh, then she resumes, quietly.

They burned the house, and we all ran to Brampton.

Oliver leads Dacey to the sloop.

OLIVER

I've thought of nothing but you. We never should have parted. I can't bear to be away from you. I've got us a passage to Rhode Island. Come aboard with me, please. Savannah is lost. Come with me.

DACEY

Aye, Captain.

EXT. LAW OFFICE OF JABEZ BOWEN IN NEWPORT DAY

OLIVER

Jabez, will you give me a ship?

JABEZ

I have an armed sloop available, if you are willing to give me something in exchange.

OLIVER

Anything you say.

JABEZ

If you'll agree to will all your earthly goods to your nephew and namesake, I will give it to you.

Jabez writes out the will and a separate contract.

Oliver Bowen will own the ship *Argo* and all prizes she captures, to do with as he likes, but the cargos will go to Jabez Bowen Shipping.

OLIVER

What about Dacey? I want to bequeath her the *Argo*.

JABEZ

Just remember, if you marry, her goods become yours, and all your goods go to my son Oliver. That's the deal.

He presents Oliver with a blank privateer commission issued by Congress. Oliver dips the quill and signs his name.

EXT. NEWPORT DAY

As they walk in Newport, townspeople pass them on Thames Street.

OLIVER

Good day, Mistress Brown.

Mistress Brown curtsies.

May I present my wife, Mistress Dacey Bowen.

Dacey curtsies. She notices Oliver's oppressed mood. At the wharf, he points out the *Argo*. When they are alone, she questions him.

DACEY

What did Jabez want in return?

OLIVER

Nothing yet.

DACEY

Prizes? Money? The cargos?

OLIVER

All my earthly goods when I'm gone.

DACEY

Is that all?

He looks darkly surprised.

It's not your fortune I care about. Besides...

She speculates, looking up at a seagull soaring overhead.

...if we keep the ships, we'll make another fortune.

Her optimism dispels his gloom.

OLIVER

We'll put the first prize we take in your name. Then Jabez can't touch it.

DACEY

(nods sagely) I see it now: a chandlery, boat-builder's, and a seaside inn.

OLIVER

Where's that, Port Dacey? (chuckles) With old Captain Bowen as the local character.

DACEY

We'll give you the place of honor at the tavern.

OLIVER

But first we must meet the British and take a prize or two.

EXT. ABOARD THE ARGO OFF RHODE ISLAND JULY 1780 DAY

The armed sloop *Argo*, with six cannon and fifteen crew, cruises from Newport to Providence. They chase the merchant ship *Surprize* and capture her without a shot.

EXT. ABOARD THE SURPRIZE DAY

As Oliver takes the ship's papers from defeated British captain Aaron Martin, his crew explores the cargo hold. Dacey brings out a wooden crate.

DACEY

Limes!

OLIVER

Is that all?

Oliver looks at the manifest in disbelief. Salty produces a pineapple.

SALTY

Pineapples, and oranges, too. Coconuts!

Appreciating the joke on Jabez, Oliver can only laugh.

OLIVER

Coconuts! I finally take a prize, and it's...coconuts!

INT. TAVERN IN GEORGIA WOODS WINTER 1780 DAY

Dr. George Wells is drinking with his backwoods friends.

DR. WELLS

And then they made me acting governor. Wright is finished.

Lieutenant James Jackson comes in with friends. They go up to the bar and order ale.

JOSIAH TATNALL JUNIOR

I have returned from England to offer my services to the Patriots.

JACKSON

Then let us drink the health of Lachlan McIntosh.

Dr. Wells turns around to see who praised his enemy. Drunk, he staggers up to Jackson.

DR. WELLS

Why, you brawling pygmy! Your hero is nothing but a scoundrel.

JACKSON

(retorts) You're the scoundrel. Your ambition has pushed aside and murdered worthier men.

DR. WELLS

I call you out.

JACKSON

Pistols.

TATNALL

I'll be your second.

The bartender rushes them outside. A shot is heard. Jackson and Tatnall return, walk up to the bar and drink their ale.

EXT. SAVANNAH JULY 1782 DAY

Fifes and drums strike up a tune. The British soldiers march away with a jaunty stride.

BRITISH REGULARS

(sing) Yet let's be content

and the times lament, you see

the world turned upside down.

Lieutenant Colonel James Jackson rides to the gates of town as Royal troops evacuate and American forces enter Savannah. John Habersham meets Jackson and gives him the keys to the city. A ship is leaving and Sir James Wright stands at the taffrail looking back at the city he loved. He is sailing to England for the last time.

EXT. BRAMPTON PLANTATION DAY

Released from the prison ship where he has languished for two years, an aged Jon Bryan returns to Brampton, welcomed by his faithful servants led by Reverend Andrew Bryan.

INT. SHEFTALLS' HOUSE NIGHT

Mordecai Sheftall returns from Sunbury, and his nephew from Charleston jail. They meet in the West Broad Street house.

MORDECAI

How are you feeling, nephew? Did they mistreat you in Charleston jail?

SHEFTALL

(sarcastically) No, they were kind as could be.

MORDECAI

Oh, look at that hole in the wall from a cannonball.

SHEFTALL

Don't worry, Uncle. I'll get those redcoats.

MORDECAI

The war is over, Sheftall. Why do you still dress in Continental uniform? Put the gun away, and get a plasterer.

EXT. PORCH OF SHEFTALLS' HOUSE DAY

Sheftall Sheftall becomes a comical figure, always dressed in his Continental uniform, always drilling. He marches up and down the porch. Oliver and Dacey walk by.

OLIVER

Good morning, corporal Sheftall.

Sheftall salutes.

SHEFTALL

Good morning, Captain Bowen. Mistress Bowen.

Children run past, cat-calling.

CHILDREN

Cocked Hat. Cocked Hat.

INT. THE PINK HOUSE NIGHT

Jemme Habersham and his wife Hester sit at dinner with Oliver, Dacey, Joseph and Isabella. A governess shoos the children into the nursery. Polite, grown up now, sits down between Dacey and Oliver.

JEMME

So you're entering public service, Joe?

JOSEPH

Yes, working for the post office.

JEMME

I'm content to be a rice factor, but it will take a long time to rebuild the business.

OLIVER

Business is booming at the shipyard. We're buying a chandlery next.

He winks at Dacey. The ladies pass the plates and pour the wine. Around the table, everyone has a convivial evening.

EXT. BONAVENTURE PLANTATION NOVEMBER 1800 DAY

Josiah Tatnall Junior welcomes his guests, arriving in boats from the Savannah River. The black boatmen sing "Glendy Burke" as the Habershams glide in on a sloop and tie up at the dock. Joseph Habersham hands his wife to a servant's sturdy arm, as she lightly steps off the stern. Joseph, Isabella and four of their grown children stroll up the oak alley to the mansion. The trunks and intertwined branches of live oaks form the letters "M" and "T".

JOSEPH

I recall when those trees were planted to honor the wedding of Mary Mulryne and Josiah Tatnall. It was around the time James Wright escaped from his mansion and ran here to this house.

ISABELLA

(smiles) Yes, after you arrested our governor. What ever happened to Sir James?

JOSEPH

He died in London a few years back. He certainly was a great friend of my father.

The Habershams climb terraced rose gardens and cross the wide lawn, where they are greeted by servants on the veranda of the handsome house.

INT. BONAVENTURE PLANTATION GREAT HOUSE NIGHT

Violins play and fires burn in the fireplaces. Grey-haired Reverend Andrew Bryan, a free man of color, is talking to Sheftall Sheftall, who still wears his Continental uniform complete with cocked hat.

REV. ANDREW BRYAN

Peace is a blessed state, brother Sheftall. Beat your sword into a plowshare and lay your weapons down.

SHEFTALL SHEFTALL

I don't trust them. When the British come back, I'll be ready. I'll be ready this time.

JUDGE GEORGE WALTON

But now that you're Justice of the Peace, you need to find a civilized way. Use your legal skills.

He sits down heavily in a side chair. Sheftall turns and marches down the hallway. At the front door, he presents arms, spins around and marches back. Judge Walton rises and exchanges a glance with Reverend Bryan, who shakes his head.

REV. ANDREW BRYAN

Gonna wear a hole in de flo'.

Dried evergreens decorate the halls, wafted by breezes through French doors. At eight o'clock, a sumptuous feast is brought into the dining room. Joseph Habersham taps Sheftall on the arm.

JOSEPH

At ease, corporal. Report to the mess tent.

SHEFTALL

Yes, Colonel Habersham.

Habersham eases the musket away from him and hands it to a servant.

INT. DINING ROOM NIGHT

Josiah Tatnall carves the turkey with a flourish, beaming at his guests.

TATNALL

What will you have, Reverend Bryan?

REVEREND BRYAN

Well, I believe I'll have the end piece.

TATNALL

What can I get you, Mistress Habersham?

ISABELLA

Surprise me, Mister Tatnall.

She gives him an arch smile.

JOSEPH

(to Tatnall) Your gardens are looking verdant.

TATNALL

In the fortunes of war, the property was sold to your brother John. Next time we met, he sold it back to me for a Continental dollar.

JOSEPH

(smiles) Johnny always liked a joke.

During dinner, a manservant comes in looking stricken.

TATNALL

What is it, Reggie?

He whispers to Tatnall and they leave together. When Tatnall returns, his face is pale but his eyes glow with determination.

The mansion is on fire.

Everyone jumps up, offering to fetch water, but Tatnall shakes his head.

TATNALL

Nothing can be done. Flames are going through the roof. Reggie, get some men to carry tables and chairs outside to the front lawn. Nan, you and the women carry the food.

EXT. BONAVENTURE NIGHT

Tatnall and his guests drink claret at a safe distance as they watch the house burn. Judge Walton stands up, raising his crystal goblet.

JUDGE WALTON

(gravely) A toast to a magnificent house.

The guests rise and drink. Joseph Habersham raises his glass.

JOSEPH

To our beloved friends and comrades from the War of Independence. Here's to Arch Bulloch, the great patriot. Here's to my brothers, James and John. And here's to my old shipmate, Oliver Bowen!

At each name, the guests drink to the great folks who have departed this world, and at the name Bowen they cheer.

JUDGE WALTON

May we always be as we are tonight.

TATNALL

May the joy of this occasion never end.

Draining his glass, he smashes it against an oak and the others follow. It's a real Savannah cook-out.

VOICEOVER (Dacey)

*They say that on moonlit nights, you can still hear breaking glass in Bonaventure.*

FADE TO BLACK