

Young Patriots



Chapter Five - by Kay Hively

Sloshing his way through the cemetery, Ben made it to the old church. The dry boards on the little porch felt good, and the roof kept away the rain.

As Ben wiped water off his face, he was suddenly yanked off his feet, dragged through a doorway, and dumped on the floor.

In the glow of a small candle he saw two figures. Blinking his eyes, Ben saw Will and Davey. Will put a finger to his lips. Whispering, Davey said they didn't want anyone to know the spy catchers were meeting.

Soon the three boys were seated on the floor. Water from Ben's clothes dripped into little puddles all around him. Will set the candle on the floor among them. Then he took a piece of paper out of his pocket.

Leaning over so the candlelight could fall on the paper, Will read the paper. All it said was "G. Washington - in New York. Harbor clear."

The paper was signed "S. M."

Ben could see the words, but he could not read them. What did they mean, Ben wondered. They sounded like a spy message. Davey said it meant the British were going to attack George Washington in New York. He had heard that the British had a big, strong navy.

Will said he thought the message meant that the British would attack Philadelphia because there was no militia to defend the city. The army was with General Washington in New York. Everyone knew that.

When Ben heard General Washington's name, his mind snapped to attention. He had met Mr. Washington many times when the great man had been a delegate at the State House meetings. Mr. Washington had kept his horse and saddle at Grandfather's livery stable.

Ben remembered that Mr. Washington was a big man, but he had a kind face and was always friendly. Ben was happy that Mr. Washington was made general of the continental army. He knew General Washington would defeat the British. When that happened, everyone in the colonies would be free of the British king.

As he listened to his friends talk, Ben was glad he had come to the old church. Maybe as a spy catcher he would be able to help his friend, General Washington. Ben's thoughts about the general were interrupted by Will. Folding the note and putting it back in his pocket, Will said they needed to find out who had written it.

Ben asked Will where he got the note. Will said he often came to the church with his father, who was pastor of the church. Two days ago, while he was playing in the churchyard, Will found the note under a bush. It looked like it had blown there from out of the street.

After they talked it over, the three boys decided on their first spy catcher assignment. They needed to find the spy whose initials were "S. M."

Ben knew that was a big job. But if the spy catchers could find him, they might save General Washington and his army. They might even save the whole city of Philadelphia.



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Classroom Extensions

Things to Think About and Do -

- A. How do you think the boys got into the church at night? What do you think the note means?
- B. What do you know about General George Washington? Read about him and then make a list of ten things about him. What was his wife's name?

Next Week: Chapter Six - Mr. Adams