

## CHAPTER 6: A FRENZY OF VALOR - aka “Stay Alive” / “10 Duel Commandments”

January 1778. Valley Forge. Hamilton is 23 years old. He’s sick (again), it’s snowing and miserable. Hardly any food. Bruised and battered soldiers. Smallpox, typhus, scurvy. 2,500 (about a quarter of the army) died. “We have resorted to eating our horses.” Pretty much.

Here’s the deal with that “Sing a song of sixpence” line: That was a British nursery rhyme about the form of currency they used so that was Lin’s way of showing Ham’s frustration. But this is what really happened... When Congress declared independence from England, they started printing their own currency called Continental Currency. They used it to buy supplies for the Revolution. Here’s the thing though - they printed over 240 million dollars. TWO HUNDRED AND FORTY MILLION DOLLARS. Ham hated it because the value plummeted. No one could accept it - not even people down with the Revolution. Farmers and merchants were trading goods instead of accepting cash. This was great for the British because their money was still going strong in America. Not to mention they were injecting counterfeit bills, making things worse. Ham. was. livid.

Because of the nonsense with the money, Congress couldn’t send funds or troops. They started begging the states for help but everyone was keeping their shit for themselves because duh. This idea of “every state for itself” threatened the whole Revolution. Hamilton was mad at Congress anyway but what made matters worse is that it seemed like anyone and everyone was getting promoted. Everyone but him, and this is the start of that theme in Ham’s life.

Washington was unhappy and more temperamental than ever - understandably. Sometimes he’d take it out on Hamilton and that strained their relationship. It didn’t help that Ham wanted a field command and Washington kept saying no. “But, if you - “ “NO.”

But Washington still kept Ham busy. Washington had to report a Congressional Committee about a proposed army reorganization and he asked Ham for help. They came up court martials for dudes who took extended furloughs, surprise inspections, and they micromanaged how they slept: haversack under their heads, guns in their arms if at a dangerous post.

Ham didn’t have spare time. He was always doing something to improve himself. Studying philosophy and history, working, etc. He wanted to learn from the past to help form the new. Carried books with him during the war. Kept notes in a “pay book.” You can see the roots of his financial systems. The start of the ideas of supply and demand.

Ham read Plutarch’s Lives, a series of biographies of famous men that showed both virtues and failings. It was written back in the 1st century. Ham learned all about these people and how they lived. Also their sex habits. Hello there.

From Page 112: “For anyone studying Hamilton’s pay book, it would come as no surprise that he would someday emerge as a first-rate constitutional scholar, an unsurpassed treasury secretary, and the protagonist of the first great sex-scandal in American political history.”

## CHARLES LEE:

- experienced officer captured by the British for 15 months.
- mouthy and eccentric. Briefly married an Indian woman and the Mohawks called him Boiling Water.
- he was talented but wayyyy too overconfident in his self-proclaimed “genius.” Arrogant.

Washington called a meeting to talk about attacking the British since they were now retreating a bit. Lee didn't think it was a good idea since the French were on their way anyway. Everyone agrees with Lee... except Hamilton because of course he disagrees. Washington told Lee to strike if the opportunity came up. Lee couldn't even deal with agreeing to that and he bitched about it. He only agreed once Washington called his bluff and assigned Lafayette. Lee stepped up and took command. Super childish.

## THE BATTLE OF MONMOUTH (HERE WE GOOOOO...)

- Hamilton and Lafayette were together, reporting enemy movements back to officers.
- British were camped near Monmouth Courthouse in Freehold, NJ. Lee was six miles away.
- Washington told Lee to attack in the morning. “If for some crazy reason, something comes up and you shouldn't, fine. But seriously though just attack.” - Washington, pretty much.
- Washington was three miles behind Lee, so he'd bring up the rear.
- Lee was supposed to keep the fight going until everyone else got there.
- It was SO HOT that day. People were dying it was so hot. Sadface.
- Lee didn't do a damn thing he was told. Ham showed up and dude was full on retreating. He didn't check in with Washington about it, just did his own thing.
- Washington came down and yelled at Lee, demanding answers. Lee told him “the american troops would not stand the British bayonets.”
- Washington replied, “You damned poltroon, you never tried them!” Poltroon = utter coward. Chernow makes a point to say that Washington never cursed and he was cursing all over the place that night. BECAUSE DUH.
- This is when the country really fell in love with Washington. He got shit done that day. He gathered his soldiers and kept things moving. His horse died from the heat (sadface), and he jumped on another one.
- Washington saved the day and turned everything around.
- “We snatched a stalemate from the jaws of defeat.” Even though they didn't flat out win, it was still a big deal for the patriots. They killed four times as many British.

Hamilton was so excited for combat, Lee said he was in a “frenzy of valor.” Of course Lee was impressed, Lee is a wimp. Everyone else noticed and said the same thing, though. He was legit young, scrappy, and hungry. Lezgo.

Hamilton had heat exhaustion and had to “take a break” from the fighting so he could... ahem... *stay alive*. Burr had sunstroke so bad that he couldn't fight for the rest of the Revolution. That, plus he was mad at Washington for not hiring him so he took a leave of absence in October.

## LEE'S COURT MARTIAL

- Lee was arrested for disobeying orders and making a shameful retreat at Monmouth
- Hamilton was super excited to be a witness at the court martial. Aaron Burr, however, totally sympathized with Lee because he hated Washington and wanted to point out every little thing.
- Lee was found guilty on all counts but he was only suspended from the army for a year.
- Lee and "his minions" kept talking shit about Washington and Hamilton.

## LEE VS LAURENS DUEL:

- Laurens wanted Hamilton to write something about Lee, but Hamilton said no. That's when Laurens challenged him to the duel.
- Hamilton was Laurens' second, which he called "an affair of honor." Ham loved these affairs of honor because he was always trying to prove himself. Says Chernow: "The man born without honor placed a premium on maintaining his."
- December 23rd, 1778. Outside Philly. Afternoon. ("Weekhawken. Dawn.")
- As per the rules, they walked toward each other and shot when they were only five or six paces apart.
- "He shot him in the side" yes, but Lee pushed everyone away and requested a round two! It never happened.
- It ended with Lee saying Washington is awesome and he never said all of those bad things that he totally said. Laurens was okay with this for some reason.
- This was an important thing for Hamilton to see because he watched two dudes fight for their ideals rather than their personal issues with each other. They both walked away with dignity and Ham saw a lot of honor in the whole thing.
- That's the end of Lee. He peaced out and lived in seclusion with pack his dogs until he died of tuberculosis a few years later. Ugh, he's a dog person?! DON'T MAKE US LIKE YOU, LEE! A PACK OF DOGS SOUNDS AMAZING.

Hamilton didn't talk shit about Lee in the press because he just printed three letters attacking a congressman named Samuel Chase, who is so charmingly referred to as... Bacon Face. Ham wrote as "Publius" (his favorite pen name) and was pissed that the price of flour had doubled - he hated the greed. He was thinking ahead, saying that every step that happens now will influence what happens in the future.

Hamilton got Lafayette to convince the French to get involved by flattering him. The French loved Ham and made him an honorary member of the French National Assembly. It wasn't really mutual. Ham thought they were stuffy and didn't like the favoritism in the ranks. He thought they were a nuisance, basically, but still enjoyed the fact that they'd smuggle in weapons and supplies. Plus, how can you not love AMERICA'S FAVORITE FIGHTIN' FRENCHMAAAAAAAN?!

Hamilton was even mad when Congress promoted Laurens to a lieutenant colonel, mostly because of his dad Henry Laurens, who was the President of Congress. Ham was disappointed by the nepotism.

"The first black battalion." Laurens was so close! Laurens hated slavery, even though his dad was a South Carolina slaveholder. Instead of his inheritance, John wanted a black battalion, freed and ready to defend SC. Congress approved the idea, but it never happened. SC stopped him at every turn and it sucked. The Revolution was SUPER hypocritical. How can you fight for freedom while slaves still existed?? Lots of prejudice and private interest.

## MORE HAM/LAURENS LOVE

- Laurens was fighting in the South and things were really bad. He was impulsive and angry.
- Very revealing letters. Hamilton wrote him a letter in 1779, and someone - probably Ham's son - crossed things out and wrote "I must not publish the whole of this."
- Read from Page 123 "I love you."
- Other letters sounded like a jealous lover, mad because John wasn't writing enough letters. Read from 124.

Chapter ends on a really depressing note. People were really skeptical about Hamilton's motives with all of his talk about a national bank. Why would a foreigner possibly have good intentions?

Ham was sad. He was bummed the black battalion never happened, he hated what was happening with our money, he was super depressed about all of it.

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Other notes:

June 1778. The French recognize American independence and signed military and commercial treaties.

He also had Ham negotiate a prisoner exchange with the British. Congress wanted Ham to throw the negotiations so they could blame the Brits but Ham wasn't having it.

Frederick William August von Steuben. Prussian soldier and baron. "Baron" and "von" were probably lies. He worked with Frederick the Great, and spoke to Ham and Laurens in French. They were his interpreters for G Wash. He was over the top and charming, cursed a lot and taught the soldiers how to load muskets and fix bayonets. Became major general.

Ham thought both British Generals Howe and Henry Clinton were terrible. Someone wanted to try to kidnap Clinton but Ham said no because he was so bad it worked out better for us to let him keep doing his thang.