

CHAPTER 8: GLORY aka “The World Turned Upside Down (Yorktown)”

Hamilton and Washington are still keeping up appearances after their rift. On the same day, Hamilton acted as his interpreter for the last time during a conference with Rochambeau AND wrote his last letter under Washington’s name. Chernow: “One of the most brilliant, productive partnerships of the Revolution had ended.”

KINDA. Hamilton set up shop directly across from Washington’s headquarters and even made sure there was a little boat so he could go back and forth across the Hudson easily. And he still kept making it clear that he was ready to jump in and fight if anyone wanted him to. Like everyone didn’t know that already.

While he waited, he kept working on his financial ideas. And guess what? People were actually starting to do things Hamilton has been talking about for years. Congressional committees were turning into individual department heads, which is what Ham said to do.

John Sullivan, who was in Congress, wanted to nominate Hamilton as the new superintendent of finance. He asked Washington about it and shockingly... Washington said he never talked to Ham about finances. WHAT?? How is that possible?! Either way, he did say that Hamilton was probably the smartest dude around (especially for his age) and that he’s super virtuous. Finally, Washington recommends him for something. BUT HEY GUESS WHAT HAM IS PASSED OVER AGAAIIINNNN. For Robert Morris.

Morris was actually really qualified. He’d been personally financing the Continental Army for years. But we’re talking about Alexander Hamilton and what did he do? He wrote Morris a 31 page letter laying out his credit system and how to make a national bank. It was so long that some of it is in Eliza’s handwriting (misspellings too) because she must’ve taken over for him when he was exhausted or got hand cramps. STOP I’M DEAD SHE IS AWESOME.

Remember when Hamilton wanted that foreign loan? That’s not good enough anymore. Things were so bad that Hamilton said we needed a national bank. He looked at other countries and this seemed to work for them. His theory was that America didn’t really have to win the war outright, we just needed to kill the British credit. How? By making the British creditors unsure about the outcome. “Make it impossible to justify the cost of the fight.” Morris agreed with Hamilton and this was the start of another meaningful relationship in Hamilton’s life.

When Hamilton left Washington’s army, he started writing his opinions as newspaper editorials. “The Continentalist” was a packet of four essays and he signed it “A.B.” Chernow sees this as the precursor to The Federalist Papers. Basically, the government needed to be stronger so states didn’t venture off into doing their own thing.

General Phil Schuyler was not at all happy about Ham’s need to be in the field. Neither was Eliza. HERE’S WHY AND THIS IS BANANAS: On August 7th, about 20 Tories and Indians busted into the Schuyler Mansion and completely wreaked havoc. They overtook the guards, took all the weapons, and had the place surrounded. Eliza, Angelica, Peggy, and their mom all clinged to Philip because this was the scariest thing that’s ever happened to them. Phillip fired a warning shot out of the window, which was a signal that was already established. They remembered that their little infant sister Catherine was downstairs and since Eliza and Angelica were both pregnant PEGGY went downstairs to get the baby. According to Chernow, someone called her a wench and asked her where her father was. Peggy was so calm and levelheaded, and she said he was telling the town about what was going on. The guy was scared of troops coming so he ran off. Way to be tough, bro. Here is the bananas part we talked about in episode two with Ashley. Legend has it that an Indian threw a tomahawk at Peggy’s head as she ran upstairs with the baby in her arms. And how do we know this? BECAUSE THE MARKS FROM THE BLADE ARE STILL IN THE BANISTER OF THE STAIRS SHE RAN UP. WITH THE BABY IN HER ARMS. YOU GUYS.

bummmm bum bum. THE BATTLE OF YORKTOWN. bummmm bum bum 1781. Monsieur Hamilton, Monsieur Lafayette!

- It wasn't one single battle, the plan started in late August and ended in mid-October.
- Washington really wanted to take Manhattan and Long Island but then Lafayette came through with the information about General Cornwallis. He was at Yorktown surrounded by water on all three sides.
- Washington's 3,000 troops and Rochambeau's 4,000 secretly marched troops from Rhode Island to Virginia. They were sent in staggered intervals so enemies couldn't figure out the plan.
- The plan was to meet in Virginia with Admiral De Grasse's twenty nine large ships plus 3,000 more troops and seven thousand American troops being led by Lafayette.
- Washington was worried about this plan, but he literally jumped for joy by the time he got to Yorktown. Mostly because De Grasse was already there and he felt put at ease. Everything was coming together.
- Hamilton got there in late September and was finally reunited with Lafayette and Laurens.
- September 28th: Hamilton and his men head towards Yorktown. They got there the day after the siege started.
- By early October, the patriots were building trenches to seal in Cornwallis and his men. It's military custom to have a small celebration when the first one is finished. What? Ham and his men had their celebration but it was cut short by the British cannons. Ham thought that was super rude, so he ordered his men out to the exposed ground and had them run drills. IN FRONT OF THE BRITISH. The Brits couldn't believe it but it didn't matter because they couldn't do a single thing to stop the patriots anyway. Still, it was totally unnecessary and put all of his men's lives at risk. Hmmm maybe this is exactly why Washington never let him see battle? Or is this BECAUSE Washington never let him see battle?
- To keep up the momentum, they had to get through two redoubts (defensive buildings). Washington said one would be taken over by the French army, and the other by the Continental Army led by Lafayette. Lafayette picked his personal aide to lead and the charge and Hamilton was - all together now - super pissed about it. Ham wrote a letter to Washington saying that he should do it because of seniority. Washington also realized that it might not be a good look to have a French dude leading the American soldiers so he let Hamilton do it.
- John Adams had a lot to say about all of this. He claimed Ham blackmailed Washington. Chernow says this is impossible, soooo SIT DOWN, JOHN!
- Someone said the code word "Rochambeau" sounded like "Rush on boys!" when said fast.
- Hamilton took over the redoubt in ten minutes and was incredibly respectful to the British. He didn't want any bloodshed. He considered acts of war to be like duels: all about respect and dignity.
- Cornwallis was so desperate he infected black people with smallpox and send them wandering towards enemy troops. This is gross and awful and disgusting in so many ways. I honestly can't get over how fucking vile this is. Dude was over.
- The image of a young man in a red coat standing on a parapet with an officer waving a white handkerchief is accurate. Same with the tens of thousands of people crowding the streets. Andddd yes, "The World Turned Upside Down" is a real British ballad and they actually sung it as they left Yorktown. DAMMIT LIN.

Hamilton rode so fast to Eliza that he had to replace his horses because they were exhausted. The last five years (ha) had really taken a toll on him and he spent two months recovering in bed. Phillip was born but Hamilton didn't resign from the army - just in case (dude, chill). Instead, Washington gave him a furlough. When he DID finally retire, he refused to take his pension, which equalled five years of full pay. He didn't want there to be any conflict of interest - butttttt this was a bad move. Chernow says Eliza and his kids would rue the day he made this choice. Ruh roh.

Ham never received any official honorings for what he did at Yorktown, but he became a legend. People saw him as romantic and death defying. Finally, Hamilton wasn't really an insecure outsider anymore. He was a war hero, he was in with the Schuyler family, and he was on good terms with the leaders of the Continental Army.