

# **There's a Traitor in the Family**

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**Book one**  
**Chapter 1**  
**The Traitor is discovered**

“Lieutenant William Stockton you are accused of treason against the crown will you enter a defense?” asked Lieutenant Richard Porter Assistant Deputy Judge Advocate of his Majesty King George.

“Our answer is here Sir” said the white wiggled junior barrister, Silas Farnum the Barrister who had been paid anonymously to defend Lieutenant William Stockton. A defense attorney or advocate for the defense was something quite rare to this court. His offer of a written reply brought a surprised look from Lieutenant Porter when he rose to address the court. Farnum leaned forward and handed the document to the clerk, who in turn carried it to the Deputy Judge Advocate.

Porter began to leaf through the documents, reading sections with little interest. But then his brows rose and a smile formed on his face. *This might be a diversion from the boredom* he thought to himself. *Sent to assassinate Franklin... Beautiful shop girls?* He read on...

“It says here your man has been ill for some time... Yet he stands before me, what was his illness!” as he peered over his glasses at Stockton standing in the dock.

Farnum bounced out of his seat as if he were on springs “He had the brain fever My Lord, out of his head My Lord. Dinna’ know who he was. He was found by some fishermen floating on a busted up old crate after sundown. They thought him dead he was so cold from being in the water so long.”

“Yes, yes...sit down young man. I see contradictory testimony from the man who set him about his assignment, his commanding officer, let’s see.....Oh no, not *him*” Porter said, not meaning to have spoken his thought aloud. “*Damned nuisance*” He muttered under his breath. He now had second thoughts about the amusement of this court martial.

Stockton’s plight meant nothing to Porter. He didn’t care if Stockton lived or died. Besides even if he wasn’t hung, then drawn and quartered which was the punishment for high treason,

confinement in one of His Majesty's prison ships was a death sentence. However, Porter disliked the commander considerably. Stockton's Commander was well known to Porter having had many complaints cross his desk concerning this man. And he'd been ordered before the Court Martial on several occasions for misconduct. But he always seemed to slip away.

The witnesses against him always seemed to disappear or have been shot during a recent battle. Porter was no angel, he took his share of the loot being taken from the rebels but the Commander fed on his own. Porter thought there might just be a way to use this court martial to embarrass the Commander politically.

Porter was bored; he wanted a diversion from the humdrum of the Court. He had actually laughed out loud when he read that poor Stockton had been enduring the company of so many fine young women.

Later that day the Commander stood in the witness box and complained openly in court about the loss of some stupid wager because of this *scoundrel*. Swearing and making loud declarations in open court and acting a mad man.

"*He's a bloody liar*" and "*I'll see the man hung.*" He yelled, spittle spraying from his lips. Porter had been hard pressed to take anything the man said seriously. However the Commander was an officer and a gentleman of breeding even if he was a bloody bore.

Porter decided he would see to it that some of this testimony and the manner in which it was given would be leaked to the press. The resulting story would cause the Commander quite some embarrassment. Porter went so far as to pay a caricature artist a shilling for a cartoon of the ranting Commander. He would see it published in the London paper.

Stockton had been arrested and taken immediately by the Commander's guards. The two officers with rifles, bayonets attached, escorted Stockton directly to the old sugar house. He was shoved none too gently into a cell with sixteen other prisoners. The smell hit him like a punch to the gut and he almost heaved. He swallowed hard and waited for his stinging eyes to adjust to the low light and the rancid, sour, sickly air. There was only a small

amount of light filtering in from a window above them. He found a small patch of floor against a wall and sat down.

For three days he sat there, no food, no water, and little sleep. The morning of the fourth day the doors banged open and he was hit in the face by a guard who dragged him to his feet. They put shackles on his hands and feet then dragged him into the court to face the court martial. He was so dehydrated he could make no sense of what was going on around him. He collapsed in the box but was dragged back to his feet.

After his hearing he had been dragged back to the cell and beaten by two of the Commander's men. He was in pain and felt ill and tired. Hunger bit into him like dogs teeth. He hadn't slept in so long...and he was hungry and thirsty, very thirsty...he dozed.

The cell door banged open and a man with a bucket and ladle kicked his way in. He began handing out bowls and then spilled a ladle full of fowl looking stuff into each. To Stockton's disgust it smelled even worse, but he was so thirsty he drank it and then forced down the bits of fat and gristle. The salt from the bits of fat made his chapped lips burn.

A second man entered with a sack of bread, emptied it onto the floor and left pulling the door shut. Everyone scrambled and fought as there wasn't enough bread to go around.

Stockton watched as the man on his left picked one of the weevils from the infested bread and ate it.

"You'll be glad of it soon" he said to Stockton when he saw him watching. Stockton was scared and shaking from fear as well as the cold.

By the end of the second day of testimony and listening to the Commander rant, Porter wanted to believe Stockton's story of an illness. If it hadn't been for the circumstances of his discovery, he would have dismissed the entire matter. The Commander accidentally discovered him when they had come face to face just outside of a hat shop in New York, where the young marine was working as a delivery driver.

Stockton had the best job of his life and he couldn't believe his misfortune...to come face to face with the one man in the colonies who was a threat to his safety.

He stepped down from the wagon, picked an armload of

boxes, turned and ran smack into a man exiting the cloth shop, a man that he recognized at once, his former Commander.

“You there...I say you’re Stockton...so this is where you’ve been hiding...you lost me a fortune, you...you traitor. I’ll have your hide I will” the Commanders voice rose in volume with each statement.

“You...you... You’ve mistaken mm..me....for someone else sir, I’m j. j. j. just a hired laborer here for Miss Timble’s fine sh..shh..shop ss.ss.sir.” stuttered Stockton in terror as he faced his former commander. But the Commander would have none of it and began swearing at Stockton.

“How dare you be *alive*! He screamed “Arrest this man he’s a deserter and traitor to his King and country...Arrest him I say” He was so angry and agitated, spittle foamed at the corners of his mouth. He had Stockton arrested on the spot.

This man had cost him the loss of a wager and the loss of face with his men. Of course the Commanders’ men actually despised him but his ego wouldn’t allow him to see the truth. His men hated him because he took advantage of his position to make profit and usually at the expense of those serving under him. He let them gamble as long as he got the cream from the top. He allowed theft and robbery as long as his was first pick of anything carried away. He was hard fisted when crossed and not above a quickly convened firing squad to cover his tracks when necessary. He couldn’t allow Stockton to live. It threatened his control and he could not be seen to be weak.

Stockton had volunteered for service in the Colonies and had been specially trained and assigned to assassinate Ben Franklin. He was watched as he boarded the *Reprisal*. The ship was being watched by a British spy who also watched Ben Franklin and his two grandsons going aboard. And yet Stockton had been discovered over a year later working as a delivery boy for a hat shop in New York. He had been discovered in the company of young women, and from all stories, quite hansom young women. Although many of the women were foreign and therefore considered to be of the lower class it was still quite comfortable working conditions.

“*Sounds to me a very fine position*” Porter had remarked to himself while reading the portion report which described

Stockton's fellow workers as six comely young women ages sixteen to twenty years. He thought this trial might be more entertaining than most and couldn't wait to hear Stockton's story from the man himself.

The Commander continued to rant and rave. He swore he had reports of men having seen Stockton in England and the Stockton family had disappeared from their home in Deerford.

But Porter dismissed this as here-say; he knew having been a victim of such reports. He himself had received reports showing him to be in three places at the same time. It had taken a week to sort out his true schedule. Mostly it was clerks' mistakes copying the wrong date and such.

"REPORTS" he blustered when the commander had come to the end of one of his tirades "Reports Sir are ninety percent lies and only ten percent truth at the best of times. I have found in my experience Sir that most reports are just some idiot corporals' way of trying to explain his way out of trouble. So we'll dismiss this report of him being seen in the family home in Deerfield and I'll have no more mention of it."

Lieutenant William Stockton, come forward, after he stood in the box. "Just tell the court your story son as you told it to me"

"Sir...ah...I mean Me Lord. I trained hard for the assignment and...could I please have some water."

"YOU...get him some water."

After Stockton was allowed a drink of water he continued. "After my training I..."

I've heard that testimony, move on, unless you wish me to pass judgment and have you taken from this court and hung" said Porter with impatient. "What happened on the..." Porter looked at his notes "Reprisal."

"Dr. Franklin is a much respected man and so was much better guarded than we had been led to believe Sir." Porter waved a hand to move him on faster "he was guarded by a fierce man from the Japans. The man carried two strange swords which he wielded with great skill. This man over powered me instantly I never stood a chance of killing Dr. Franklin sir.

They asked who had sent me and said they would keep me on board until I spoke. I betrayed no one, even though I knew the

longer I waited the further I would have to swim. After they questioned me over and over and finally when I would not speak they threw me into the sea well away from land. It was powerful cold and I was in the water a long time, I know I was a dead man. The next thing I know I was in a bed. I was told I was with fever for several days but was treated by some foreign woman who saved my life.”

“Where is this woman now? Why has she not stepped forward?”

“I don’t know sir” lied Stockton knowing exactly where Mai Li was but he also knew they would arrest her as well if she did come forward.

“Go on.”

“I remembered nothing of this or even my name until I came face to face with the Commander and it all came flooding back, I swear this be truth. Ask the people I worked with, they’ll tell you I’m not lying”

“We have.” Said Porter “We’ll get to the truth soon enough” *but the truth is, one way or the other you’re a dead man. The only difference, will it be a quick death or a slow death* thought Porter.

Stockton’s cover story was devised by Ben Franklin, Will and Mai Li and members of his new family. Upon their return from Bristol they had discussed what he would do for the New York spy network and he took up the position as delivery driver for the hat shops *Chapeau De Paris* which gave him freedom to travel throughout the colonies and deliver hats. Hats whose ribbon carried special messages

Takashi, the samurai guarding Franklin for the Timble family had quickly overpowered Stockton and removed any threat. Instead of throwing Stockton overboard Franklin had recruited him into the new service for the CSC (*Committee of Secret Correspondence*). This new intelligence network for the United States was formed by Benjamin Franklin, Benjamin Harrison, and Thomas Johnson under the direction of the Second Continental Congress.

It was Franklin’s suggestion. “If ever you are caught by the British we feel you need a plausible story” said Franklin and with Mai Li’s medical knowledge they had worked out the story of

being thrown over board and the bad fever.

The memory loss was Will's contribution. He had related how on one voyage they had discovered a cast away on floating wreckage. The man discovered had been in the water for several days. He'd had no food or water and was in bad shape. After he recovered his health somewhat he claimed he had no memory of how he'd come to be in the water at all. He knew only that his name was Joseph but couldn't remember his family name.

It had been Will's opinion at the time that the man had been a pirate and thought it best *not* to remember. But the guy was pretty loopy most of the time, singing and dancing on the deck. "Much like you my friend" Will poked fun at his friend Franklin as they walked the deck.

"It is the judgment of this court that you are guilty of treason. You will be returned to your prison where you were housed and then 30 days hence be transferred to one of the hulk ships to await transport back to England."

Stockton was taken from the court back to the sugar house. He was shocked at the judgment. He was to be transferred to one of the prison ships within thirty days. He knew this was a death sentence and that he would be systematically starved to death along with hundreds of other American colonist accused of crimes against the king.

Copies of the finding were made and sent to Will Timble who had through several intermediaries paid a small bribe to the scribe who copied such documents for the court martial. Once Stockton's situation was known to the family, plans were made for his escape. It must be done before he was transferred to the hulk ship.

## Chapter Two

### The escape

It was a wet cold night, it had rained most of the day and now there was a heavy fog blowing in from the water. William had volunteered for the part, since as an old man, he would be less threatening. He walked toward the two guards standing post just outside the sugar house. He mimicked the staggering gate of a drunk as he moved toward the guards.

He sang at the top of his lungs. “Ohhhhh Molly was a wonderful girrrlll...when she danced she did such a whirl ” William sang out of tune and slurred his speech “She lifted her skirt fer meeeee...to show me her pretty kneeeeeesss” He had two bottles of wine, one in each pocket of his great coat, the tops of which protruded openly. He stumbled and fell just a few feet in front of the first guard.

“Hey” William gave a convincing hiccup. “Hey there sonny...how about helping an old man up” he hiccupped smiling happily and playing his part well. He reached up with his arm toward the guard.

“Get yourself up you old sod and get the hell away or I’ll bash your bleed’n head. Get away ya hear.” he shouted.

“You don’t have to shout...I’m old not deaf. And I don’t need your bloody help anyhow.” He rolled over and tried to rise. When he did one of the bottles flashed in the light and the guards face changed. “Guess it wouldn’t hurt to give you a hand...”, he said in what he must have thought to be a somewhat kinder voice, trying to seem to have had a change of heart. “Hey Francis! Come and help me a minute will ya”

“Don’t call me Francis you know I hate...”

He lifted a finger to his lips and pointed to the bottle to silence the continued protest forming on the other man’s lips. The soldiers leaned their weapons up against the wall and grabbed William under the arms and hoisted him to his feet. William staggered a bit then seemed to stabilize in an upright position.

“Ohhhhh...Molly was a wonderful girl...She had such pretty gold curls...” starting up his tune again and he took a step forward, teetered, and then took a second step. As he stumbled

forward down the boardwalk the first guard lifted a bottle and the second guard grabbed the one on the other side. William pretended not to notice and stumbled away down the street.

“Thanks old man” the guard called out to him when he was well out of ear shot. He turned to his partner in crime and lifted the bottle “This’ll keep us warm tonight, it will.”

“Two bottles, and not bad wine from the look of the label. Open yours and we’ll share then we’ll open mine.”

“You take me for a bleed’n fool, bly-me. I ought smack your head I had, open my bottle and we’ll share, no wonder your folks named you Francis” he laughed and took a friendly swipe at the other guards head

“OK, OK, it was just an idea I dinna mean nothing by it. I wasn’t try’n to get over on you I wasn’t, truth. Don’t be gett’n your knickers in a twist. You got that knife of yorn handy” and they proceeded to open both bottles of wine.

A few minutes later two figures appeared from the fog. They seemed to have no edges and blended with the blowing fog. Their bodies were covered in what looked to be clouds or woven smoke. Their gi or clothing they wore was made by a special weaving process known only to those who possessed the secret from the Eight Books of Fate and Wisdom. The material was woven from a special unbleached raw silk, grown in only one small area of China. The cloth woven from this silk actually reflected light in some areas and absorbed light in others. In some areas the thread was translucent, almost transparent and in others an opaque, non-reflective white.

They approached the now sleeping guards silently seeming only to be part of the tumbling fog. The guards sat side by side heads lolling a half empty bottle in each of their hands. They were sound asleep thanks to the poppy Mai Li, one of the cloud figures, had added to each of the bottles to insure this result.

It was only moments before the guard was to change. The guards on duty were to be replaced by two from inside and the door would be unlocked only long enough for the exchange. This only happened twice a day, once at two in the morning and once at two in the afternoon. Together the two cloud figures pulled the guards to the side of the building between the sugar house and the shop next door.

Takashi quickly slipped into one of the coats he'd taken from the sleeping guard. Mai Li pulled on the coat of the second guard and they placed the hats on their head and lifted the weapons and took up a position on either side of the door. Mai Li just got into position, let out her breathe and the small inspection window slid open. *Too close* she thought to herself. She could almost hear her heart thumping. Takashi touched her hand and she relaxed.

“Report.”

“All’s well, now let us in to warm up you bleed’n sod we’re freez’n come on hurry it up” Mai Li mimicked the voice of one of the guards. She and Takashi her husband from Japan had been listening from the darkness when William had put on his little song and dance an hour before. And it wasn’t the first time Mai Li had acted the part as a man since she had joined the Timble family. She had traveled with William’s son as his man servant and protector on his privateering adventure. Now she was in New York helping the Timble family recover one of their own who had been convicted as a traitor by the British and was bound for one of the death ships.

The bolt on the inside of the door was pulled back. The face of the inside guard appeared between the small space.

“Password?”

“Wine” said Mai Li in a low voice.

“That’s not the password.”

“It is tonight, try some” and she shoved the open bottle toward his face blocking his eyes and distracting him from seeing who they really were.

“Wine did you say?” and a second greedy hand took hold of the bottle and lifted and took a long pull “Oh...It’s sweet and warming and wonderful.” said the second guard inside.

“Give me sum’a that” and the first guard grabbed the bottle Takashi shoved forward and lifted it to his mouth. He pulled the back of his hand across his mouth “Got just the right amount of fire to warm your belly. Where’d you guys get this fine stuff?” Takashi pushed the door further open. Takashi hand moved quickly in the dark, the wind from his strike caught the one small candle burning in the entry way. It guttered and went out casting the entry in darkness.

“Some drunken old man stumbled and fell out front. We

relieved him of some of his burden to lighten the poor man's heavy load. And then helped him homeward as any good Samaritan would do" laughed Mai Li in her best man voice "Hurry man, better be take'n it outside a'fore someone wakes up. You don'e wan'na be sharing this prize."

The two inside guards with bottles at their lips exited the dark room quickly and took up their post outside without ever really seeing Takashi or Mai Li. An opportunity like this was not one they wanted to share so they eagerly moved outside. Takashi closed the door and bolted it. They were half way there. Now all they had to do was get back out without arousing anyone. They had obtained a number of keys from the former owner of the building. The gentleman had been evicted from his building by the British and given no compensation. His protest that he was a loyal British citizen and that he had rights had fallen on deaf ears. He'd been told if he showed up again he'd be allowed to stay in his building. Now that the use had been converted to a prison, sharing the fate of the hundreds of his neighbors was a threat he had not appreciated nor took lightly. He had revised his views and joined the new patriots and swore to revenge himself upon such tyrants as these. So when he was offered a chance to help the rebels and make a profit.

"Here my good man, these are all the keys I have. They have only added two locks, one on the rear door and one on the new door into the hallway where the new cells are."

"How did you know that?" Will had to ask.

"Eldon Postlethwaite the locksmith told me. If you go by his place and pay him for the keys, old Postlethwaite will sell them to you. I know cause he offered them to me. If you got copper that is, he won't take no trade nor none of that *Franklin* paper neither. He might trade for some whisky though that's got might scarce these days."

The next day Will Timble and his Father William had gone round and invited Postlethwaite out for a pint. On the offer of a drink at the public house he'd quickly put on his coat hung up his out sign and followed William and his son along. When they were safely tucked into a private room with Mai Li watching the door outside. Will said "Mr. Whistlepost"

He looked momentarily shocked but recovered quickly and

said somewhat indignantly. "That's Postlethwaite"

"Oh I'm so sorry, my man must have gotten it wrong" said Will "No disrespect meant my good man. My name is Will Timble, I respect tradesmen one of my best friends is a well-known tradesmen. Maybe you know him, Ben Franklin. He's away at present but you may call upon his house for my reference if you chose." Postlethwaite's head popped up at the mention of Franklin. "My father and I have some small favor we need. We'd like to buy some keys and we are prepared to pay with silver coin" The serving girl knocked and after hearing "enter" from Will opened the door and entered.

"What would you like to drink Mr. Whistlepost, I'm sorry I mean Postlethwaite" said Will and winked at the man knowing he now understood that this man knew his contact name and Postlethwaite would answer to him during the operation. Postlethwaite had been recruited by Franklin and received a monthly stipend from the Congress to co-operate with his skills when needed.

"It's a little early but I'll take a glass of rum, to steady myself. Got used to my tot I did when I was at sea and kept the habit when I became a lubber."

William ordered a small brandy and Will asked for boiling water from which he would make his tea. He made sure the girl understood it was to boil for several minutes before putting it into the pot, not just hot but boiling.

After the girl departed Postlethwait said "It's a pleasure to meet the Pirate it is I've heard tales of you I have. I even seen a book once in London, paid a woman a copper to read it to me I did. Where's that beautiful Chineee woman, is she about, I like to meet that one I would" he said with a leer in his voice but seeing the look that those words provoked on Will's face shut the man's mouth

"To business. We need duplicate keys for the sugarhouse."

"That going to cost you a bit that is. How soon will you need them?"

"Now, we know you have them made up already. You'll get ten shillings in silver; we'll follow you back and pick them up."

"Wait a minute I think its worth a lot...."

“Don’t think, just drink your rum and I don’t really think you want to meet the Chinese lady tonight do you, she might just give you one of her famous ear to ear smiles with her knife?” Will had read the book that was supposed to be about his adventure as a Privateer in the Caribbean. They always made Mai Li a beautiful China maiden but a bit bloodthirsty so Will just let the look on his face and the threat do its work. Will stared at the man until he looked away.

After a few more sips of his rum Postlethwaite said “OK let’s go” he stood and looked at the unfinished drink as if it was a parting lover. However his face changed to a small smile when he pocketed the silver coin that Will placed on the table in front of him.

Thanks to this effort by Will, Mai Li and Takashi had keys to every door. Mai Li took a firelighter from her cloak, fired the match cord and lit a small lamp. They wanted to wake no one if possible. This way the guards would wake fuzzy headed in the morning and never know why they were one prisoner short. The next day it was written into the report as a death. Lt. William Stockton died that night and William S. Timble was reborn.

Takashi quietly unlocked the hallway door leading to the overcrowded rooms being used as holding cells. The stench was terrible. The smell of decay and death was everywhere. Mai Li knew this was not normal human smell this was the smell of gangrene. It upset her that they were not allowed to free everyone. Only Lt. Stockton was to disappear and she understood why. The family had adopted him and they were somewhat responsible for his arrest or at least they felt they were. So the martial skills of Mai Li and her Samurai husband were needed again. In and out without the British knowing they had been there was the goal.

The door swung open with a rusty squeak. Mai Li shut down the lantern and they froze. They could hear moaning and someone was whimpering and someone else crying. After a minute they moved to the end of the hallway to the last room. Mai Li opened the lantern allowing a small patch of light to fall on the door just long enough for Takashi insert the proper key. Each key had been notched so they could be identified in the dark. When he had the proper key in his hand, he signaled Mai Li with a light touch. The light flashed and darkness again claimed the space.

Takashi touched Mai Li's hand to signal he was ready, turned the key in the lock and opened the door. Mai Li threw open the shutter of the lantern. The light would temporarily blind the eyes of those sleeping inside. This way anyone seeing them enter couldn't possibly tell who they were. Takashi quickly located Stockton pulled him up and over his shoulder. Mai Li quickly tied a cloth around them to help Takashi hold him steady and they made their way slowly and quietly toward the front door.

"What's...who."

"Be quiet" whispered Takashi in Japanese so Stockton would know who was carrying him and co-operate.

Mai Li flashed the light Takashi inserted the key. They opened the front door and found the guards laying just where the first two had been and fast asleep, right on schedule.

When they were well away "Let me down I can walk" whispered Stockton "Takashi...Mai Li...how did you ever" and he broke into tears "I thought I was going to die in that place and then I heard what was coming...I was to be sent to the death ship...I had given up all hope. Thank...Domo Arigato" he said in a sign of respect and gratitude he bowed low to Takashi. He took Mai Li's hands and kissed each finger and cried with the sheer joy of one reborn.

"Stop this and come away quickly we still have some distance to travel tonight."

"Where are we going?" ask Stockton

"We are meeting with Will and his father then we will go to where the rest of the family is at the compound and factories. They walked about half a mile to where there was a covered wagon with a sign on the side *Boutique Chapeau De Paris*. The horse stood slack hipped sleeping but tethered to a tree.

"Pull the feedbag from her nose and let's be moving" Said Mai Li.

Silently Takashi woke the old mare by stroking her face and removed her feedbag from her nose. Then jumped onto the wagon and pulled the leads into his hands.

"Get up there" he said quietly and popped the leads. The horse reluctantly took the weight and pulled the wagon slowly away. Mai Li had helped Stockton into the back of the wagon, followed him in and closed the shutter. Once she had him settled

she pulled a small flask from her cloak.

“Drink this please” said Mai Li “It will help with the pain and let you rest” Mai Li handed Stockton a flask of sweet wine with a small amount of sleeping draft incorporated in the drink. He drank a sip and since the taste was pleasant and he was very hungry it took little persuasion for him to finish the entire flask. Soon he was sound asleep. Mai Li lit the lamp with her Timble fire lighter and began checking his wounds. She opened his shirt, closed her eyes and shook her head. The cut from the bayonet was gangrenous. The stench would have made most people retch but Mai Li was a healer. She had grown up in her father’s Chinese apothecary and medical practice. She had been dressed and trained as a son. Only after her father’s death had the family discovered her true identity. Her spiteful aunt sold her into slavery. She had come to England as a slave, been rescued and adopted by the Timble family.

She took several sharp knives and began the process of cleaning the wound. It took the better part of an hour before she was satisfied that she had done her best. She then washed the entire area in the high quality alcohol spirits she now brewed for this specific use. She recently learned this skill from one of the sailors who worked for the Timble ship company. He had been caught making squeeze and had been put to the lash. Once punishment had been met out she had dressed his wounds then asked him to teach her his craft.

## Chapter Three

### Play your cards right and

Mrs. General laid her cards face down on the table and added sugar to the tea that had just been served to her by a maid. She was sitting at the table with several of the wives of men her husband served with her husband in his Majesty's army. They gathered once a week to play cards and each brought news and gossip to share.

Mrs. General's attention had been diverted from her cards by the loud voice of one of her rivals for the presidency of this club, a Mrs. Commander something. Of course Mrs. General was the natural leader of the group, her husband being the highest rank officer, this made her a prime target for gossip... She turned in her chair just enough to be able to hear better

"Yes! He arrested a traitor and you'll never believe where the scoundrel was found" said Mrs. Commander something in a too loud voice, wanting to be heard by all, not just those sitting at her table. She now had everyone's attention; she stole a quick knowing glance at Mrs. General who was pretending to ignore her. "YES, the marine that was assigned to kill Franklin, you know the one everyone was wagering on.

"He's alive?" ask one of the women at her table.

"YES! Alive and here in New York! But that's not the best part, my husband came face to face with the young marine and you'll never guess where."

She stole a second glance at Mrs. General before she delivered the coup de gra. Mrs. General resolutely did not look and stirred her tea again.

"He found him working at the *Boutique Chapeau De Paris* claiming he'd lost his memory. My husband arrested him immediately but he has since died I understand. Mrs. Commander knew this would remind Mrs. General and everyone in the room of the hat incident and embarrass her in front of all these ladies again.

But Mrs. General wasn't embarrassed. On the contrary, she took the news as a wonderful development, as the root of an idea began to grow. She knew exactly how to take advantage of this situation.