

STORYWRITER MESSAGE

This story is about having a safe place to call home—about the values we share as Americans.

I was surprised to learn about the women and children who had such difficult lives during the revolutionary war— not unlike, I am sure, many people around the world today. Not too long ago, I attended a revolutionary war reenactment. I was there for the soldiers, the cannons, the sheer adventure—looking for a story.

A city of tents with women and children in costume caught my attention. I asked why were women and children there and soon discovered that many people followed Washington's army because they had nowhere else to go. Some 2,000 women and children followed their fathers: sometimes walking nine miles a day, sleeping on the ground, and having very little to eat. They were their own little army, without the muskets. How sad, I thought.

It is a little part of our history that many Americans have never heard about before. Many were taught in school about George Washington, the Minute Men, the British—but what about the little boy or girl who suffered through the horrors of war.

Projecting myself back in time I asked my ten-year-old self how would I feel? How would I react? And so, I crafted a fictional story, around real events, of a ten-year-old boy caught up in the midst of the war, who just wants to go home and be safe—and maybe play checkers again like I did.

In 1778, 10-year-old Elijah and his Ma and Pa live on a farm, just outside of Philadelphia. Pa wants no part of the revolution. He just wants to be a farmer. When the British ransack his house, his wife Maggie is killed. Angered, to say the least, he joins the 6PA regiment. With nowhere else to go, Elijah follows him. Elijah's only solace—his only piece of home—is playing draughts (checkers) with his Pa at night. It reminds him of home. When his Pa goes missing at the Battle of Monmouth Elijah sets out on an impossible adventure to find him. Wearing no shoes, no shirt, his body covered in mud, and a feather stuck behind his ear, Elijah sneaks out of camp, runs into a cow, is chased by a dopey guard, befriends a Oneida Indian Guide, darn near gets shot by Col. Hamilton, falls eight feet into a creek, reunites with his faithful Dog Jack, is captured by British horse soldiers, and plays draughts General George Washington himself! Will the chance encounter with the General and a game of Draughts save the young boy's life to reunite with his Pa and get them home?"

Michael Dooling - Storywriter, Illustrator, Executive Producer