

*DAWN OF AMERICA—BOOK TWO*

# WINTER'S RAVAGE

*AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR  
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*Dedicated to my snow-loving grandchildren, Jubilee Jane and Endeavor  
("Indy") James. I pray you never experience such a hard winter as 1780.*





*New Haven, Connecticut*  
*December 1779*

At first, Zadok imagined the cold had awakened him. The sky was yet dark, long before dawn.

A pounding at the front door awoke Aurinda. “Zadok?” Terror laced her voice, and she trembled beside him, whether from the cold or fear, no one could differentiate during this dreadful winter of the Revolution.

“Stay here, my love.” He endeavored to control his own shaking words as he pulled on his leather breeches, tucking in his shirt tails with difficulty. His numb fingers stubbornly refused to tackle the buttons. Instead, he grabbed his pistol and slowly opened their bedroom door. This time, the thick portal reverberated with intense pounding.

A voice yelled through the wood, “Ho, there. This is Sergeant Harris of the Second Connecticut Brigade. I need to speak with Corporal Parlee.”

Zadok ran toward the sound and unlocked the door. “Come in, lest ye freeze.”

“I believe I already have.” Sergeant Harris stepped inside,

rubbing his hands together. His face was chapped and bright red, and his nose ran profusely.

“Let me throw another log on the hearth.”

“Much obliged. You be the Corporal’s brother-in-law, then?”

“Aye.” Zadok stoked the logs to incite a stronger blaze. “Is it bad news for Levi?”

“Might be. The Second has been called up to meet with the main Army at Morristown.”

“Morristown? New Jersey?”

“Aye. Spending the winter there, and they need all the troops to gather and build cabins.”

Levi entered the room, already dressed in his regimentals. “Sergeant Harris.” He nodded at his superior.

“Parlee, sorry to come so abrupt like. Especially since you be wed such a short time and all.”

“I understand. Duty calls. I expected it sooner or later.”

Zadok stared at Levi with furrowed brows. “I didn’t know that. Mercy will be heartsick.”

“I fear she already is.”

Mercy, wrapped in several blankets, joined them near the hearth. She attempted to smile but failed. Instead, tears rolled unhindered down both cheeks. Levi wrapped his arms around her and held her closely. “I’ll be well, Mercy-Love. Never you fear.”

“Aye. I shall pray for you every day.”

Levi reached down and lifted her chin. He kissed her as though it would be their last.

Zadok turned away.

Mother came out her door. “Oh, my dear, Levi. Must you go?”

“I fear so, Mother Wooding.” Levi released Mercy and gave his mother-in-law a peck on the cheek. “Take care of Mercy and the baby for me.”

“You know I shall, Levi.” Now Mother was crying.

Zadok shook Levi's hand. His fingers were nearly as frozen as his own. "Stay warm out there, brother."

Levi smirked. "I'll do my best."

Zadok returned to his room, closed the door, and removed his breeches, nearly falling in the effort. He climbed back under the covers with Aurinda and snuggled next to her for warmth.

She gasped. "Zadok, your feet are freezing!"

"Then warm them up." He grinned at her and nuzzled her cheek with his benumbed nose.

"I fear I've married the coldest man in America!"

He kissed her tenderly on her mouth. He was grateful for her enthusiastic response that soon warmed them both.