

Chapter I

War's sweet tae them that never tried it.

It was early morning, and fog enshrouded land and sea. Out in the bay a ship was anchored, rolling gently, silently. Standing on deck was the captain, weatherbeaten and creased, staring into the blank whiteness.

Slowly the sun rose in the east, burning off the fog. The village of Silloth lay quiet in the misty dawn as the captain paced the deck, eyes never leaving the shore. It was well into the morning, and he was anxious to be off. Where were they?

At last there was commotion at the water's edge. Men, chained to one another, were being loaded into lighters.

"All hands on deck!" the captain shouted, and soon the deck was swarming with his men. The prisoners came on board, one after another, the hot sun shining down on the crowded deck. The last lighter unloaded, and pulled for shore. The prisoners filed past Captain Pemberton, each one giving his name, before being taken to the hold below. Captain Holme would be waiting for them in Maryland, and if any were unaccounted for, Pemberton would be marked as careless.

"John Gray." A thin lad passed by.

"James Stroon." Another down to the hold.

"William Lawson." The captain glanced up. Tall, well built. He would bring a good price. On and on the line stretched, more than two hundred young men. At last all were chained below, and the anchor was pulled.

Captain Pemberton, master of the ship, once again stood on the rolling deck, watching Scotland disappear. If he knew how

much this voyage to America was going to change the men below, he didn't care. He had much to worry about, getting them safely to Maryland and delivered to Holme. Scurvy, mouth rot, pirates, and storms. How many would see the shores of America?

It was early May, 1747, as the *Johnson* glided out of the harbor and out onto Bowness Solway. Will sat with his back against the cold side of the ship. The Jacobite cause was dead. The fighting to place Prince Charles Stuart on the throne all ended in this. It was the lawful succession for a Stuart to be king, and yet George II sat on the throne. His mind went back to that day over a year ago, when he had left his mother and their peaceful farm in the highlands of Scotland, to fight with the Bonnie Prince Charlie. He had left to fight for his father, thought Will, remembering the hatred he felt to the British who had killed Robert Lawson so many years before.

He could remember with perfect clarity that February day he left to join the Jacobite forces. Word had come that the Prince was camped nearby. Closing his eyes, he could see it all. His mother, packing a sack for him, pulling out woolen shirts and knitted socks from the old chest in the corner of the kitchen. She was a brave woman, sending her only son off to war with her blessings. He had been anxious to leave – impatient.

“Don't rush so, Will,” she had said. “Ye will get there in time. Aye, it wouldn't do to go empty-handed.” She had sat him down at the table for one last meal of hot oatmeal, fresh bread, and homemade cheese.

“Ye must listen,” she had said, sitting down across the table from him, and lowering her voice. He had fidgeted and hoped she would hurry up.

“If yer to fight for the Stuart cause, so shall I. If I ever need to hide a Scotsman in danger, I shall. I am not afraid.”

“Ye had best be off, afore dark.” She came round and grasped her only son in her strong arms. Will could almost feel it now, could almost see the courage and strength in her eyes as she let him go. What had he said to her? It tormented him

that he couldn't recall a single word of his own on that snowy day when he had said good-bye. He hadn't realized, turning one last time to look at the woman in the doorway, that before he saw her again, if ever, he would be sailing to a foreign land. A sharp feeling of remorse filled his heart. Why had he been in such a hurry, so immature, so full of thoughts about himself?

Some of his fellow prisoners had fallen asleep, overcome with exhaustion from the long march that morning, coupled with the fever they had carried out of jail. A group off in a corner began to fight over something. He could see why the captain had ordered that only six men were to be chained together in a group, and that all groups were to be separated by so many feet. With the sickness and fighting, six were all one could endure.

His thoughts began to turn again to Scotland, and Bonnie Prince Charlie. He found himself growing bitter at the very thought of the Prince. No, he must forget that. What use was it to remember now? He was headed to America, as a convict. There he would be sold as an indentured servant for seven years, his punishment from England.

That in itself was enough to think about. What was life like there? Unlike some, he had never been curious about the New World. He knew many that had become indentured servants to pay their passage over. They were sold to plantations for several years of labor, but were given lighter work than the slaves who were sold for life.

His mind was crowded with thoughts. Who would buy him? What sort of life would he have, serving a master? His thoughts became fuzzy fragments as he drifted off to sleep.

He awoke when a sailor brought supper to the men. The sailor set down a large pail of steaming oatmeal, and Will could smell the molasses in the air. He hadn't realized how hungry he was. He and the other two healthy prisoners ate their fill in silence, and then tried to feed the sick ones, who only moaned and pushed it away.

There was nothing to do as they sat in the dark, for the sailor had taken the lantern away. Small talk began among

them. Malcolm McKinley was chained on one side of Will, and a sick prisoner on the other.

Malcolm, along with his brother John, had joined the Prince's forces at the same time as Will. While imprisoned in England, lots had been cast for those men who would go to trial. Out of every twenty prisoners, one would be taken before the court, the rest shipped to the New World. The lot had fallen on John, and he was taken away, never to be heard from again. Everyone knew that most were executed after the trial, and Malcolm had grown bitter against England for killing his brother.

The men sat and talked of home. James talked of the girl he had left behind in Scotland. They were to be married, and then James joined Charles' forces. He had been ready to settle down, but love for his country had come first. Although it was dark, Will could see James in his mind. He was tall, his bulging muscles a sure sign of a blacksmith. Like everyone else, James' plans had abruptly ended. Soon everyone fell silent again, most of them drifting off to sleep. Will wished he could. Instead, his thoughts continually returned to the Prince, and the fighting.

The Prince had been so sure of victory, had seemed such a brave and strong leader. His army had made it to the very outskirts of England. The victory would be theirs – and Bonnie Prince Charlie would sit on the throne! Then, for no apparent reason, they were ordered to turn back. The Scottish rebels had finally reached Glasgow on Christmas. It had been a cold day, and the brilliant orange sun was just beginning to set when they reached the city. Here they thought to find support, shelter, and food, but they were mistaken. Glasgow supported England, and would have nothing to do with the Prince or his men.

Months of cold, hunger, and discouragement followed. Bonnie Prince Charlie seemed to have lost all leadership ability, and did little other than drink away his troubles while his army suffered. His forces tried to deliver a sneak attack on the British troops one night, but it was a failure, and they had

marched all night back to their camp at Drum Mossie. The men were tired, chilled, hungry, and discouraged.

The attempted attack on General Cumberland's forces did not go over well either, and just two days later both sides had lined up to fight at Culloden. The Jacobites were greatly outnumbered, but determined to stand their ground.

Will remembered every detail of that terrible battle which had lasted but a short time. They had been in bad weather all day. The April spring, which had seemed so promising, had given way to winter's last fling. The temperature dropped steadily as the rain turned into sleet, coming down in sheets. The freezing rain stung their faces, and the cold wind cut through them.

Artillery barrage began with the English Hanoverian forces. It cut down many of the Jacobites, but still they stood their ground. Then came the fateful charge, and the scene became a fierce, bloody battle.

It was all over in less than an hour. More than seven hundred and fifty Jacobites lay dead or dying, their blood turning the snow a deep scarlet. Will remembered the despair and anger as he watched his comrades dying. Escape was impossible, and he would never desert them anyway. Cumberland became a revengeful, bloodthirsty general, ordering his soldiers to kill all the wounded as they lay dying.

Some of the prisoners were locked into churches, or abandoned barns and sheds, left to starvation and the cold. Cumberland's forces combed the countryside of Scotland for days afterward, looking for supporters of the Jacobites. It was obvious they meant to stop the Stuart cause, once and for all.

Will again thought of his mother. Was she all right? Had she gotten involved and hidden Highlanders who had fled? Not all of the Jacobites had been killed or captured – some had run away into hiding. He pushed aside the thought of what would become of his mother. As his fellow Scots would say, *sorrow is suin eneuch when it comes*.

And here he was, in this rolling ship, a convict of England. He should have been thankful that he had been imprisoned

rather than killed or starved. He should have been thankful that the lot had not fallen on him. One out of every twenty had followed John's fate. But how could he be thankful, when he didn't even know if he would ever see his mother again, or his country? His head ached, and his arms felt heavy. The wind must have picked up out on the ocean. He felt sick.

"Four weeks, three days," Malcolm told his fellow convicts, as he scratched another mark on the beam beside him. A shaft of light came in through an open hatch, but otherwise all was dark.

"Aye, but it seems much longer," commented one.

"And it will be longer yet. Our voyage is only half over," another said.

Four weeks, thought Will. And it might take eight or ten. How would he stand it? He longed for fresh air, to see the sky and sunshine again. He felt trapped in the hold of the ship.

It must be June now. He would be sixteen on June twenty-sixth. Some of his fellow convicts had finally recovered from their fevers, and Will was past his sea sickness. The journey was bearable at the moment.

Two weeks later they were caught in a storm, somewhere in the middle of the Atlantic. If Will had thought he was seasick before, it was nothing compared to this continual heaving of the ship as the howling gales plunged the *Johnson* this way and that.

They were all sick, down under the deck, with all hatches closed. The putrid smells of sickness and disease were trapped in with the prisoners, the air close and stifling. Rain came down in torrents for days, and they could hear the claps of thunder above the wind. No one felt like eating – the very smell of food repulsed them. The many diseases that attack prisoners aboard ships had begun to inflict Will and his group. Andrew's gums had become a bloody, sponge-like substance,

which the ship's doctor had immediately identified as mouth rot.

"It will clear up once on land. Wash out your mouth once a day," was all he had said. Andrew wasn't suffering alone. James, the one who had been the strongest and healthiest of them all, had suddenly taken a fever during the night, and now continually worsened. Will looked over at Francis, the freckles standing out on his thin face. He looked pale, but then again, Francis always looked pale. A hatch had been opened to let fresh air in under the deck, but it did little to help.

Will wondered how much longer they had on the rolling ship. "Two or three weeks, depending on weather," a young sailor had told the prisoners. He had brought them their meal, and being homesick and bored, sat and talked with them for a while. Malcolm had just scratched six weeks onto the beam a few days ago. The ship pitched heavily to one side, and those that were sitting fell over. Will felt sicker than ever.

He awakened the next morning to see sunshine slanting in through an open hatch. The storm had passed, and already he felt better. The others began to awake also. They were another day closer to land.

When the sailor brought their food at midday, Malcolm asked for the doctor. "James is very ill. I think the doctor needs to look him over. And Andrew hasn't been able to eat for two days now." Andrew's whole jaw was swollen, and he sat staring with feverish eyes. Will glanced at James. He was lying off to the side, as far as the heavy chain would allow him. His eyes were closed, and his breathing was shallow and sporadic.

Malcolm picked up the rusty nail and scratched down the day. Beside it he put the initials *J.R.M.* It was evening, and darkness was gathering. No one felt like eating. Death had invaded their group of six. They had awakened that morning to find James lying quietly, breathing no more. They all felt the loss of a friend, and the sailor who brought their food looked sober as well.

As the weeks dragged on and on, Will had found himself dwelling on the past too much. It filled him with anger every time someone fell sick, died, or had to suffer. He had seen James, the strong Highlander, slip into death's grip; he watched day by day as his friend Malcolm lost all interest in life, sinking into a depressed state over the loss of his brother John.

More often though, Will thought of his mother alone at the mercy of Cumberland's forces, and was filled with anger toward Prince Charles. The traitor had fled before the fateful battle, drunk and terrified. Where had he run to? Did he not feel for the hundreds of young men he had sent to their death or indentured years?

The cry of land sighted was heard early in the morning of July 16. Overhead the prisoners could hear the running of feet and excited voices as all hands on deck ran to view the thin green strip of land – America.

They would finally be off this stinking, disease-filled ship. It seemed as though it had been an extremely long time since they had land under their feet.

Everything moved along quickly now. The captain was seen everywhere, giving orders to the sailors who had grown lazy during the long voyage.

Will and the others were taken on deck. He could not take in the smells and sights of life fast enough. The strong breeze blew in his face, warm and fresh, as shrieking sea gulls swooped over the deck. The sun beamed down, water glared back, and a pale blue sky was filled with puffy clouds sitting together in bunches. He felt his spirits lift and his heart beat faster as he gazed over the wide stretch of water at the green in the distance. For a moment, he felt some of his old self return. The excitement of something new, and the desire to work again. America – what would it bring? He glanced down at his wrists, and the chains suddenly seemed heavy. He was not free to do as he wished in America.

Sailors were running about, obeying orders. They worked from group to group on the crowded deck, handing out worn but clean shirts, breeches, and razors. The captain was obsessed with making a good impression of his cargo with his American customers. Right now, they all looked like sick, dirty convicts with patchy beards, not like a respectable indentured servant that would bring a good sum of money.

The chains came off for the moment, as deck hands threw bucket after bucket of cold salt water on the filthy prisoners. Once Will and his group had gone through the rigmarole of cleaning up, they were permitted to sit on deck, chained in their circle, and enjoy the day. The ship was undergoing a major overhaul, as sailors and deck hands ran here and there, cleaning and scrubbing everything down with water and vinegar. It was rumored that they were supposed to have done this during the journey, to cut down on disease, but apparently the captain never bothered.

Roger sat cross-legged next to Francis, playing some sort of game with a piece of old rope and a pebble. They all soaked in the warmth and sunshine. It was getting hot as the sun climbed higher and higher. The sailors moved more slowly, their shirts off and beads of sweat trickling down their faces. Will glanced at Malcolm, and wondered if the two of them would be sold together.

Captain Holme came the next day, and the prisoners were put on his ship. The *Gildart* set sail for Port Oxford, Maryland. The young sailor told them they would be sold soon. They were all tired of waiting.

"I am so weary of ship life," Roger complained, spitting out the cheese which was supper. It was old and moldy, with tiny green spores popping up like peas in a garden.

"I want to stay here. I don't want to be sold to strangers," Francis whined.

"No Scot ever gives in to fear or discouragement," Andrew answered.

"No Scot should ever be sold to a master, either," Malcolm replied forcefully