

ESTHER WOOD BRADY

TOLIVER'S SECRET



YEARLING

The country was counting on her!



One

*G*randfather must have lost his wits.

Ellen was sure her grandfather had lost his wits when she saw him slip into the dark kitchen and lock the door with a big key. Without giving his usual cheery greeting he tiptoed to the window and pinned the heavy curtains together with a knitting needle.

"Don't want anyone peeping in this morning," he said to Ellen's mother who was making bread on a table by the fireplace.

Lights from a small fire on the hearth darted about

the big old kitchen. From the dark corner where she sat brushing her hair, Ellen could see light glimmering on a tiny silver box he carried in his hand.

"Is the loaf ready now?" Grandfather whispered to her mother.

Mother's white cap fluttered up and down, but she did not speak. Very carefully she patted and shaped a small round loaf of bread.

"Well, then, let us go ahead," Grandfather said as he gingerly placed the silver box on top of the lump of dough.

Ellen stared at the little box. It was his favorite silver snuffbox. She was too surprised to speak when she saw him press the snuffbox into the dough, smooth over the hole that he had made and dust off his hands. His round face had a wide impish smile.

"No one will find it there," he said gleefully. He stepped back and cocked his head to one side. "Bake it crisp and brown, Abby, with a good strong crust. It has a long way to travel."

"You're quite sure no one will find it, Father?" Mother sounded frightened.

"Now don't worry, Abby. No one will find it." He patted her shoulder and gave her a kiss.

Ellen saw that he was wearing the white wig with

the turned-up tail that he always wore when he went to the tavern. Underneath his blue wool coat he wore a long waistcoat with brass buttons down the front. He was short and stout and the buttons marched down his waistcoat in an outward curve. He never wore these clothes when he worked in his barbershop.

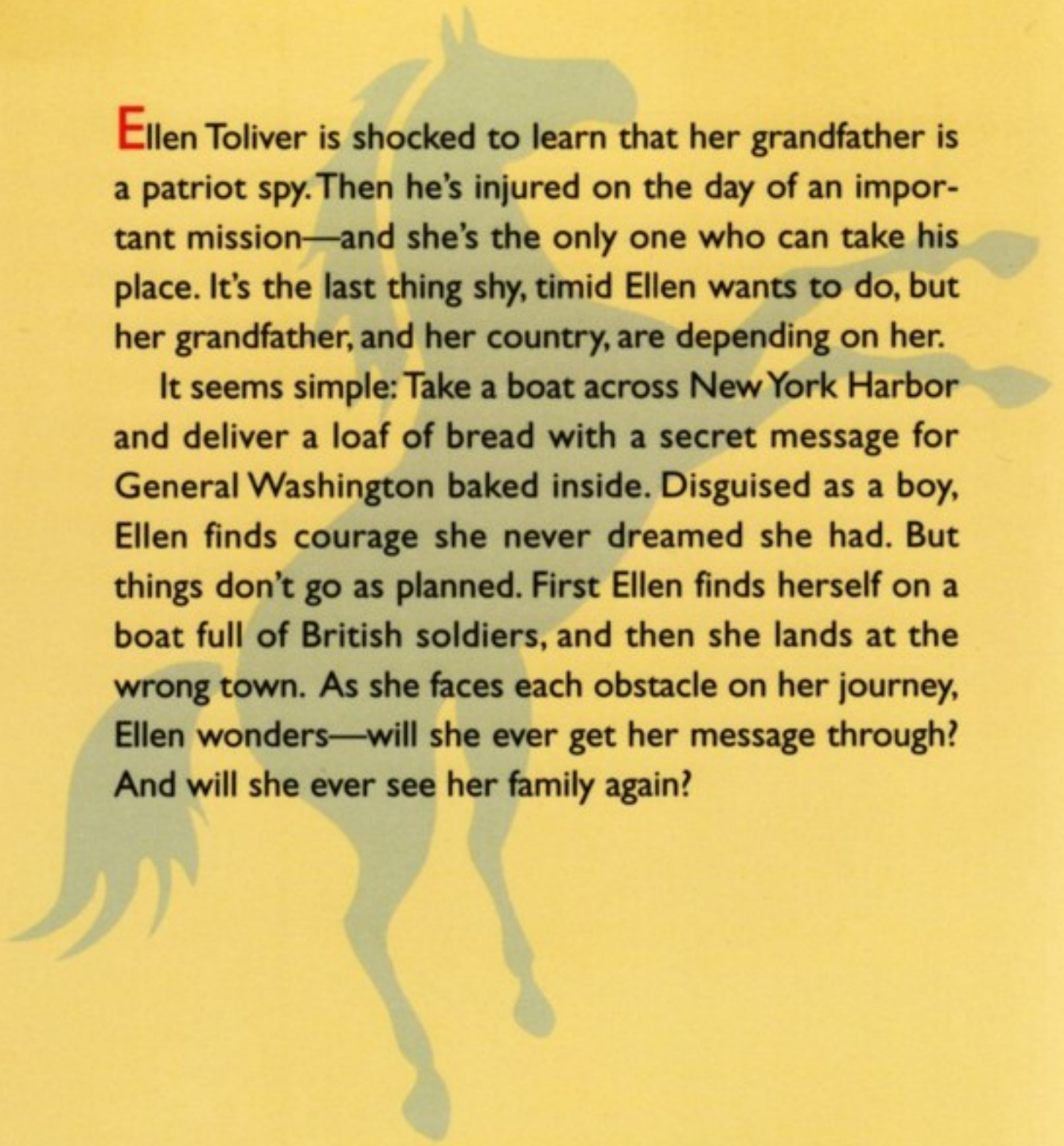
Ellen was so puzzled she had to speak up. "Whatever are you planning to do, Grandfather?"

Quickly her grandfather spun around and peered into the deep shadows of the old kitchen. He gave a sharp cry that made her jump up. "I thought you had gone to the corner pump, Ellie!"

Ellen curtsied. "I was just about to make the bed, but I'll leave now, Grandfather." She picked up her red cloak and pulled the hood over her long brown hair.

Grandfather stepped across the room and grasped her by the shoulders. "Don't ever speak of what you have seen, Ellen Toliver," he warned in a gruff voice she had never heard him use before. He was usually so friendly and cheerful, even in the early morning, even with the British officers around. But now his twinkling blue eyes looked as hard as points of steel. Ellen was so startled she dropped her cloak.

"But I was just wondering—"



Ellen Toliver is shocked to learn that her grandfather is a patriot spy. Then he's injured on the day of an important mission—and she's the only one who can take his place. It's the last thing shy, timid Ellen wants to do, but her grandfather, and her country, are depending on her.

It seems simple: Take a boat across New York Harbor and deliver a loaf of bread with a secret message for General Washington baked inside. Disguised as a boy, Ellen finds courage she never dreamed she had. But things don't go as planned. First Ellen finds herself on a boat full of British soldiers, and then she lands at the wrong town. As she faces each obstacle on her journey, Ellen wonders—will she ever get her message through? And will she ever see her family again?

www.randomhouse.com/kids

US \$5.50 / \$7.99 CAN

ISBN 0-679-84804-5



9 780679 848042

50550



S



YEARLING

A Yearling Book

New York

RL: 5.2

009-012

Cover art © 1993 by Dan Andreasen

COVER PRINTED IN THE USA