

A NEWBERY HONOR BOOK



My Brother Sam Is Dead

James Lincoln Collier &
Christopher Collier



IT WAS APRIL, AND OUTSIDE IN THE DARK THE RAIN whipped against the windows of our tavern, making a sound like muffled drums. We were concentrating on our dinner, and everybody jumped when the door slammed open and banged against the wall, making the plates rattle in their racks. My brother Sam was standing there, wearing a uniform. Oh my, he looked proud.

"Sam," my mother said. We hadn't seen him since Christmas.

"Shut the door," Father said. "The rain is blowing in." That's the way Father was—do right first, and then be friendly.

But Sam was too excited to pay attention. "We've beaten the British in Massachusetts," he shouted.

"*Who* has beaten the British?" Father said.

Sam shut the door. "We have," he said, with his back to us as he slipped the latch in place. "The Minutemen. The damn Lobsterbacks marched out of Boston yesterday. They were looking for Mr. Adams and Mr. Hancock and they marched up to Lexington. Some of the Massachusetts Minutemen tried to stop them there in the square, but there were too many British, and they got through and went on up to Concord looking for ammunitions stores. But the Patriots got the stores hidden mostly and they didn't find much. And then when they turned around and went back, the Minutemen hid in the fields along the roads and massacred them all the way back to Boston."

Nobody said anything. They were silent and shocked. I couldn't take my eyes off him; he looked so brave. He was wearing a scarlet coat with silver buttons and a white vest and black leggings halfway up to his knees. Oh, I envied him. He knew everybody was staring, but he liked being the center of attention, and he pretended

it was just an ordinary thing and he was used to it. "I'm starved," he said, and sat down at the table. "I started out from Yale at six o'clock this morning and didn't stop to eat all the way."

There were seven of us at the table in the taproom. Mother and Father and me were there. Then there was the minister, Mr. Beach, who lived in Newtown but spent Saturday night here in Redding so he could preach in our church early Sunday morning. Then there was a couple of farmers from Redding Center I didn't know, and, of course, Sam. But still they all sat silent. I guess they figured that it was up to Father to speak first, seeing as Sam was his son.

My mother got up, fetched a plate from the rack, and filled it with stew from the iron pot on the fire. Then she drew Sam a pot of beer from the tap and put it all down in front of him. He was hungry, and he bent over his plate and began shoving in the food as fast as he could.

"Don't eat like that," Father snapped.

Sam looked embarrassed and sat up straight.

"All right, now," Father said. "Tell us the news again in an orderly manner." Father had a temper and I could see he was trying hard not to lose it.

Sam dug his spoon into the stew and started to fill his mouth, but suddenly he realized that if he began talking with his mouth full, Father would yell at him

Torn by War

All his life, Tim Meeker has looked up to his brother, Sam. Sam is smart and brave and always knows the right thing to do. Everyone in town admires him. Until now.

Sam has enlisted in the new American Revolutionary Army. He talks about defeating the British and becoming independent and free. But not everyone in town wants to be a part of this new America. Most people are loyal supporters of the English king—including Tim and Sam's father.

War is raging and Tim knows he'll have to make a choice. But how can he choose when it means fighting his father on one side and fighting his brother on the other?

★ "Wrenching." —*Booklist*, starred review

"This stirring and authoritative novel earns a place beside our best historical fiction. . . . A memorable piece of writing."

—*Horn Book*

A Newbery Honor Book

An ALA Notable Children's Book

A National Book Award Nominee



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