

# Spy Run

Linda Hirschmann

"It can't be done!" Mr. Geiger hit the table with his fist. "I've carried messages for the general before. You know that. But not this time!" Emily watched her father as he paced the floor of their cabin. Two neighbors nodded. "I would chance a quick ride," one man said, "but not this. It's too long." The other man looked out the window. "Redcoats! Spies! They crowd into those woods closer than trees. Our rider will be caught. No man can do it" "Could a girl?" No one answered Emily. She spoke louder. "Maybe they wouldn't stop me." "You're a child, Emily," one man said gently. "There's too much danger. You would be afraid. " "I am not a child!" Emily cried out. "I'm thirteen, and I'm not afraid!"

"You don't know my Emily," said Mrs. Geiger. She put her arm around her daughter and went on. "Let my girl boast or fib and she reddens like the brightest sunset. Look at her now. Not a blush to her. She's not bragging. She's not afraid." "If Emily isn't afraid," Mr. Geiger said, "it's because she doesn't understand the danger." Emily shook her head. She knew how risky a trip through the South Carolina backwoods could be. The Geigers and their friends wanted to be free from their English king. But most of their neighbors did not. They spied for the king's army of Redcoats. Of course Emily understood the danger. "There is danger, but the message must get I through," said Mrs. Geiger firmly. "Let General Greene say if Emily goes or not. " General Greene sighed. He wanted someone older. This girl was so young and shy. But he had no one else. "The English just split their army," said Greene, pointing to his map. "While they're split, we have a chance to beat them. But I must move quickly, and I must have more men." Tell Thomas Sumter to meet me here tomorrow night." He pointed to a spot on the map. Would his message get through? Greene frowned at the girl. Now she knew his orders. Would she forget? He drew a small map, added a sentence, and handed her the paper. "Give this to Sumter by tomorrow noon. If you're late, he won't reach me in time." By early afternoon, Emily had begun her ride. The map was safely hidden deep inside her dress. She had never ridden so far alone.

But she didn't worry about getting lost. She was more worried that each person she passed would stop her and grab the map. But no one even looked at her. By nightfall, she stopped thinking they might. Emily awoke early the next morning. Suddenly she heard riders. Redcoats! She could

see them. But they never came close to her path. By midday, the air grew sticky and hot. She stopped at a stream. While her horse grazed, Emily rested and ate. Then the sound of a deep voice made her jump and turn. "What are you doing there?" Emily gasped as she stared up at two Redcoats. "Where are you going, lass?" "I'm ..." Emily started to stammer. Then she remembered her mother's words: The whole of the world sees when my girl lies. She blushes the fact. If she lied, they would know it. But she dared not tell the truth. "Look at her," one Redcoat said. "Jumpy as a bedbug and not a bit more to be trusted. She's a spy." "Her?" the other one laughed. "She's just a lass. She's no older than my sister back home." "It pays to be sure," said the first soldier. "I'll take her to camp. You find a woman to search her."

The Redcoat watched Emily's every move as they walked to the camp. There was no way she could get rid of the map. In camp, he locked her in a shed. Light shone through the cracks between the wallboards. Quickly, Emily pulled out the map and looked for a hiding place. The floor was hard, packed dirt. Even if she could kick up a hiding hole, it would be spotted at a glance. There was no place to hide it. And soon a woman would come to search her. Emily could think of only one thing to do. She studied the map one last time, shredded the paper, and swallowed each piece. A minute later, the door opened. A woman entered. The woman felt the hem and seams of Emily's clothes. She poked inside her boots. Then the woman banged the door behind her. Emily heard the bolt drop into place. She hugged herself. No more than an hour had passed since they caught her. She would reach Sumter in time. She pulled on her boots. Then she waited for someone to come to the shed and set her free. Emily paced. She peered through a crack in the wall. Had they forgotten her? Should she beat on the walls? No. Only a spy would be in such a hurry to leave. They would know that. "Lass!" a voice called then. "Are you ready to ride? If you had told the truth in the first place, we would not have held you.

Knowing the real truth, Emily smiled. Never before had she been so happy to see a Redcoat. She felt him watching as she rode out of camp. Then, sure no one had followed; Emily whipped her horse into flight. Emily reached Thomas Sumter in time for his men to help General Greene. But that battle did not end the war. Both sides fought until, in 1783, the American colonies became free.