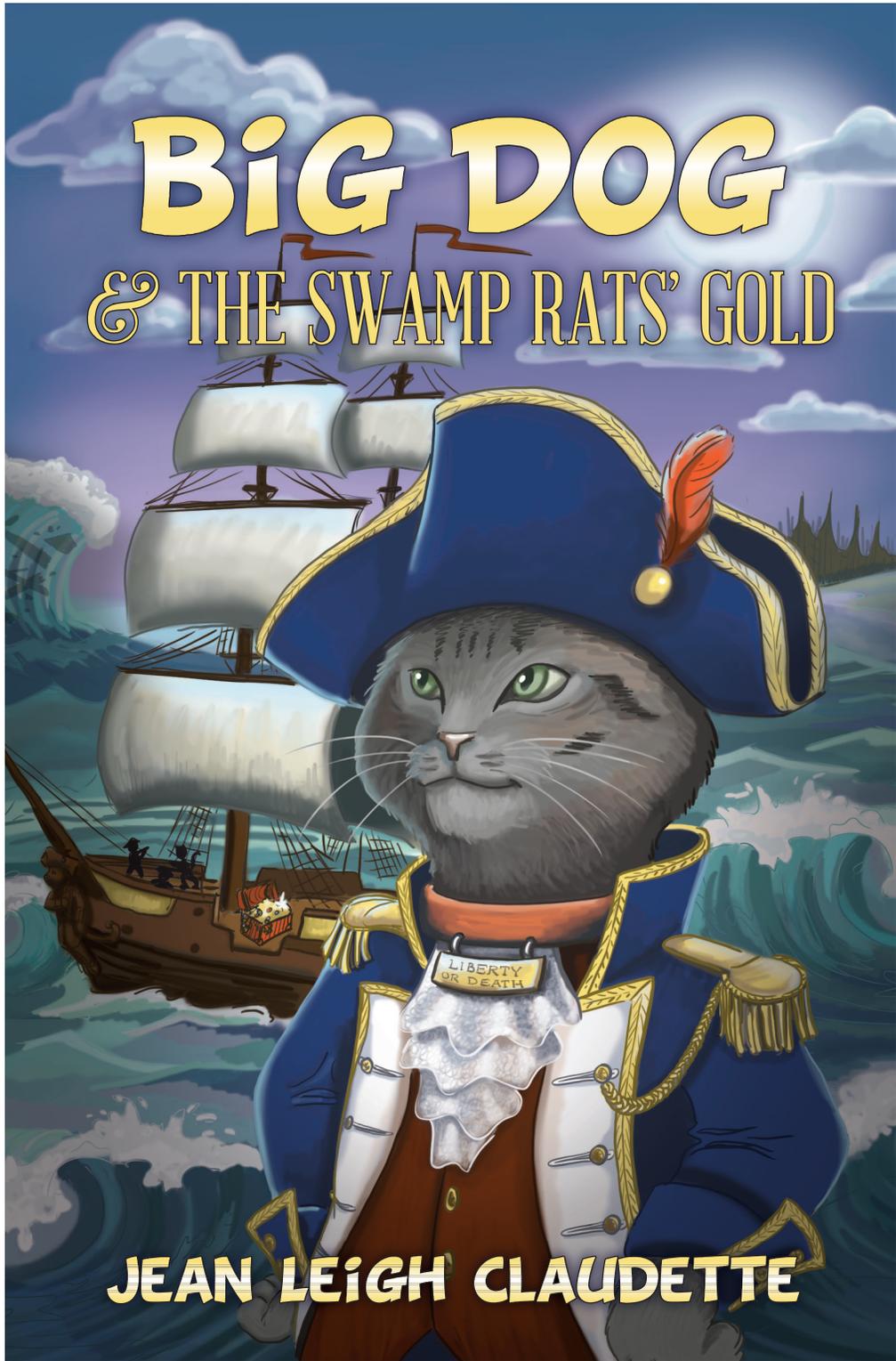


BIG DOG & THE SWAMP RATS' GOLD



JEAN LEIGH CLAUDETTE

BiG DOG
& THE SWAMP RATS' GOLD

BiG DOG
& THE SWAMP RATS' GOLD

JEAN LEIGH CLAUDETTE

REDEMPTION
PRESS 

© 2019 by Jean Leigh Claudette. All rights reserved.

Published by Redemption Press, PO Box 427, Enumclaw, WA 98022
Toll Free (844) 2REDEEM (273-3336)

Redemption Press is honored to present this title in partnership with the author. The views expressed or implied in this work are those of the author. Redemption Press provides our imprint seal representing design excellence, creative content, and high quality production.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any way by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—without the prior permission of the copyright holder, except as provided by US copyright law.

ISBN 13: 978-1-68314-843-2

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2019938284

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

James 1:17 (KJV)

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

John 3:16 (KJV)

LIST OF CHARACTERS AND DEFINITIONS

Barbary Pirates, pirates from North Africa who attacked ship for plunder and ransom.

Bateau, a long, flat-bottomed boat with a sharply pointed bow and stern. The plural is bateaux.

Big Dog, a very large cat who is the captain of the *Liberty Bella*. His real name is General. He is descended from one of General George Washington's barn cats.

Bosun, a naval officer in charge of the ship's rigging, anchors, cables, and deck crew. Also called boatswain.

Bursar, the ship's treasurer.

Corvette, a small, fast three-masted sailing ship with a single gun deck.

Crow's nest, the platform near the top of a ship's mast used by a lookout.

BIG DOG AND THE SWAMP RATS' GOLD

Ethan Allen, a cat descended from a cat owned by Ethan Allen, the general who formed the Green Mountain Boys.

Frederick, self-proclaimed leader of the swamp rats.

Foxy, a cat, known as the **Swamp Fox**, from the South Carolina swamps, who leads the mission to recover the lost gold. He is a descendant of a cat owned by General Francis Marion.

Frigate, a three-masted sailing ship, larger than a corvette and carrying more guns.

Helmsman, the crewman who steers the ship.

Gray Brothers, big, gray cats from the South Carolina swamps, who act as guides in the mission to recover the lost gold.

Green Mountain Catties, cats descended from cats owned by the Green Mountain Boys, a militia group formed by Ethan Allen to resist British tyranny in the Revolutionary War.

Hamilton, the *Liberty Bella's* bursar.

Liberty Bella, the corvette used in the missions to retrieve the lost gold and drop off important documents.

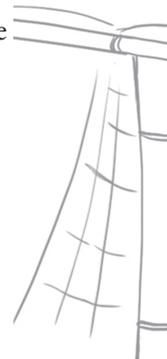
Lightning, the *Liberty Bella's* main lookout who mans the crow's nest. He is descended from Benjamin Franklin's cat, Midnight.

Linchpin, the *Liberty Bella's* helmsman and a descendant of John Paul Jones's shipboard cat.

Man-of-war, a powerfully armed sailing ship.

Mr. Henry Nathan: a freed slave who helps oversee the missions of the *Liberty Bella* and *The Faith*.

Punkin-Tater, the *Liberty Bella's* cook.



LIST OF CHARACTERS AND DEFINITIONS

Reveiller Avoir Faim, the *Liberty Bella's* second-in-command (also known as **Second**). His name means “awoke hungry” in French, and he goes by the nickname **Revelie**. He is a descendant of a cat owned by Monsieur Lafayette, a French soldier and politician on General George Washington’s staff during the Revolutionary War.

Robbing Robbie, a frigate manned by pirates who originally help steal the gold but now attempt to recover it.

Schuyler, the *Liberty Bella's* bosun, also known as **Shulie**.

Snuggedy Swamp, the swamp in South Carolina where the stolen gold is hidden.

Swamp Rats, men who live in the South Carolina swamps, where they fled to escape from forced service for the British. They were part of the group who originally stole the gold and are now looking to recover it.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Liberty Bella.....	13
Gold In and Gold Out	19
The Mewling.....	25
Shadow on the Water	31
Snuggedy Swamp	37
The Swamp Rats.....	43
Not Seen, but Right There.....	49
Storms in the Swamp	55
Going to Sea	61
Riding the Waves	65
The Battle Engaged	71
Victory and Pain	77



THE LIBERTY BELLA

1795

The night is dark and chilly. October winds stir the water in the bay. The clouds lie thick above the earth, and there is no sign of the moon or stars. It is a night suitable for a secret mission such as the one underway. Most folks are home tucked in bed, which serves the purpose of this secret mission for those who are moving about this windy night.

BIG DOG AND THE SWAMP RATS' GOLD

Big Dog balances easily in the bow of a boat being rowed across Chesapeake Bay. Wrapped in his cloak, he pulls his tri-cornered hat low on his forehead. The waves slap his boat and spray flies across his face. He tastes the salt in his mouth. Six rowboats move ahead of Big Dog. These boats are filled with fine sailors and soldiers with their families.

The seven boats are the last of a group carrying a complement of three hundred souls. They head for a sleek ship anchored in the bay. They see her far out, rocking on the waves like a baby in her cradle. It is the *Liberty Bella*, the finest ship that ever drew water. She is a sixty-foot-long corvette with four decks, one being the gun deck. The *Bella's* three masts stand tall in the night. She is a beauty, a real beauty, and as fast as the wind. The *Liberty Bella* and her sister ship, *The Faith*, are modeled after one of the first cruisers commissioned by George Washington. He is the first president of the nation at the time of this account. The two ships are smaller in size than the other ships being built for the American navy. The *Bella* and *The Faith* are different in other ways as well. They have been built with two special crews in mind—the crews now boarding them.

Big Dog admires the *Bella* through night-darkened eyes. She and *The Faith* are fine ships for an important mission in this year of our Lord 1795. In the morning, crews on both ships will raise the flag of the new American nation. Big Dog always admires it flowing in the wind. It carries thirteen alternating red and white stripes with thirteen white stars in a field of blue. Betsy Ross had sewn the first official American flag in May 1776.

Big Dog chuckles deep in his throat. It is a sound somewhere between a growl and a purr. He is excited. He



THE LIBERTY BELLA

is captain of the *Bella*. Big Dog is a cat, a very large cat. The *Liberty Bella* and *The Faith* are as agile as cats themselves and are crewed by cats, fine cattles every one.

The Faith, anchored around the bay, also carries a complement of three hundred. *The Faith's* mission will send her northward and the *Bella* will sail south.

The oarsmen ease the rowboat up next to the *Liberty Bella*. Sailors and soldiers effortlessly scale up the rope ladders and drop soundlessly over the side. Big Dog does the same. The ship's bosun, Schuyler, known as Shulie, sounds his bosun's whistle immediately. He's in charge of the ship's rigging, anchors, cables, and deck crew.

Reveiller Avoir Faim (pronounced *rev-u-lair afwa fahm*), known as Revelie, is Big Dog's second-in-command. "Captain on deck!" he calls.

Soldiers and sailors come to attention.

The captain acknowledges his crew and dismisses them to their duties. He steps to a quiet corner of the deck, followed by his second.

Revelie, whose name in French means "awoke hungry," gives his report to the captain. "Sir, all sailors and soldiers accounted for, and families are safely quartered. Supplies are stowed belowdecks. Weapons and munitions are secured."

Big Dog nods. "And Mr. Nathan?"

"In your quarters, sir, though they be a little small for him. He awaits your arrival."

"Thank you, Second. Carry on."

Big Dog watches the large tabby move away among the sailors and soldiers as they work on deck. He thinks of Revelie's history, which is a rich one. He is a descendant of Monsieur Lafayette's cat of the same name. M. Lafayette and



BIG DOG AND THE SWAMP RATS' GOLD

the first Revelie traveled across the sea to aid in America's struggle for independence.

Big Dog looks around. All of his crew, and those of *The Faith's*, are descendants of cats owned by the Founding Fathers. Those people had been patriots and soldiers of the new nation. There is Stitch, the surgeon, a descendant of Betsy Ross's cat. There is Lightning. He mans the crow's nest high up on the ship's mast and is a descendant of Benjamin Franklin's cat, Midnight, who had been with Mr. Franklin the night he flew the kite in the thunderstorm. They had been testing Mr. Franklin's theories about lightning and electricity. The cat who had hovered in the shadows by Mr. Franklin bore the sign of the adventure all his life. When lightning struck the key tied to the kite string, it ran sizzling along the key, and Midnight, being a very curious, young feline, was standing too close. The lad's hair stood on end from the top of his head to the end of his tail, never to lay smooth and flat again. After that night Mr. Franklin changed Midnight's name to Lightning. It was an oddity of nature that all his descendants bore the same distinguishing, fuzzed-up jacket all the days of their lives.

There is Silver, descended from Paul Revere's household. There is Linchpin, the helmsman who steers the ship, descendant of John Paul Jones's shipboard cat. Mr. Jones had been a privateer who ran British blockades for the new nation. Big Dog chuckles because Linchpin Jones is fond of saying, "I have just begun to fight!"

There are Ticonderoga and Von Steuben. There is Foxy, who is vital to this mission. He is descended from a cat owned by General Francis Marion, the Swamp Fox. Foxy, who is also called the Swamp Fox, knows the South Carolina



THE LIBERTY BELLA

swamps and low country like the back of his paw. That is the direction *Bella* is heading.

And then there is Big Dog himself, whose real name is General. His ancestor had been a barn cat on Mount Vernon, the household of General George Washington, now president of the new nation.

Big Dog beckons to a lieutenant. "Please advise Mr. Nathan that we will hear him now, and send one of the midshipmen to bring the families above deck."

