



Revolutionary

By Alex Myers

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“A remarkable novel” (*The New York Times*) about America’s first female soldier, Deborah Sampson Gannett, who ran away from home in 1782, successfully disguised herself as a man, and fought valiantly in the Revolutionary War.

At a time when rigid societal norms seemed absolute, Deborah Sampson risked everything in search of something better. *Revolutionary*, Alex Myers’s richly imagined and carefully researched debut novel, tells the story of a fierce-tempered young woman turned celebrated soldier and the remarkable courage, hope, fear, and heartbreak that shaped her odyssey during the birth of a nation.

After years of indentured servitude in a sleepy Massachusetts town, Deborah chafes under the oppression of colonial society and cannot always hide her discontent. When a sudden crisis forces her hand, she decides to escape the only way she can, rejecting her place in the community in favor of the perilous unknown. Cutting her hair, binding her chest, and donning men’s clothes stolen from a neighbor, Deborah sheds her name and her home, beginning her identity-shaking transformation into the imaginary “Robert Shurtliff”—a desperate and dangerous masquerade that grows more serious when “Robert” joins the Continental Army.

What follows is a journey through America’s War of Independence like no other—an unlikely march through cold winters across bloody battlefields, the nightmare of combat and the cruelty of betrayal, the elation of true love and the tragedy of heartbreak. As *The Boston Globe* raves, “*Revolutionary* succeeds on a number of levels, as a great historical-military adventure story, as an exploration of gender identity, and as a page-turning description of the fascinating life of the revolutionary Deborah Sampson.”

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

This deftly written debut historical novel from male transgender author Alex Myers follows a strong-willed young woman who takes a huge gamble and fights as a male soldier for the American colonists. Deborah Sampson is a 22-year-old indentured weaver who confides in her closest friend, Jennie Newcomb, about her desperate need to escape their oppressive small Massachusetts town. After surviving a sexual assault, Deborah dresses as a young man, skips town, and reinvents herself as Robert D. S. Shurtliff. She meets a recruiter and manages to pass herself off as a boy old enough to enlist in the Continental Army. Writing as Robert, she begins a correspondence with Jennie before Deborah marches with her regiment to their new military base at West Point. She befriends James Snow, an apprentice blacksmith and fellow private. Keeping up her male disguise proves tricky, but her army peers accept her as a full member of the light infantry. She likes the freedom and respect accorded a male enough to convince herself she wants to maintain her masquerade. Problems arise when Corporal Shaw threatens to expose her true gender before she makes a good showing during a British ambush. After suffering a tremendous personal loss, Deborah undergoes a change of heart about her role as a man (Robert), and as a woman (Deborah), in Myers's original and affecting novel. (Jan.)

From [Booklist](#)

"You must be able to imagine how good it feels to be assumed capable and intelligent and not always to have to prove this matter," writes Deborah Samson to her friend, Jennie, during her remarkable Revolutionary War service, which she accomplishes while disguised as a man named Robert Shurtliff. In his debut, transgender author Myers relates the story of a courageous, real-life woman. His straightforward, clear prose lets the important and complex issues he raises shine through, including gender identification, the desire for self-expression, and the meaning of freedom in an era when women's choices and actions were severely constrained. The novel follows Deborah, a tall, sturdily built 21-year-old who escapes repressive Middleborough, Massachusetts, in 1782 by enlisting in the Continental Army. Crisply rendered scenes shift from days of camaraderie and routine camp life around West Point to deadly skirmishes, the unmasking of traitors, and the discovery of unexpected love. With this thought-provoking work, Myers resists modernizing Deborah/Robert's predicament and lets readers explore both the external and internal transformations of this valiant American soldier. --Sarah Johnson

Review

"I raced through this vividly imagined tale, unable to put it down. It is a remarkable story of a quest for independence so unusual and startling that it is remarkable to know that it was based on the author's ancestor, a young indentured woman who discovered the freedom and ultimately the cost of becoming a man. Set during the Revolutionary War, it is teeming with insight, as astonishing as it is readable, a story that reveals the limitations women faced and the courage it took to defy them." (Robin Oliviera, author of *My Name Is Mary Sutter*)

"Alex Myers' novel is terrific. The book is a page turner; it has characters you care about; and it is imaginative in the best sense of the word. Myers' recreation of Deborah Sampson at war is vivid and full of suspense ... I look forward to its success." (Alfred F. Young *author of Masquerade: The Life and Times of Deborah Sampson, Continental Soldier*)

"Alex Myers' debut novel, *Revolutionary*, is more than an accounting of Deborah Sampson's amazing Revolutionary war feat of enlisting and serving a three-year tour in the army disguised as a man; it is an

exploration of the irony of such circumstances. In following her true nature--who she is at heart--Deborah creates for herself a duplicitous life fraught with personal risk. This beautifully written account is a reminder that gender identity and the struggle for equal rights has always been with us. Perhaps now, in our time, we can set aside our biases and not simply ask how Deborah Sampson did what she did, but understand why." (Heather Sharfeddin *author of Windless Summer*)

"A novel of the American Revolution by a writer who is himself a true American revolutionary." (Mark Edmundson *author of Why Teach*)

"Alex Myers' debut novel is a marvel. *Revolutionary* explores the life of Deborah Samson who, passing as a man, fought in the Revolutionary War. In this exquisitely rendered fictional account, Myers paints a portrait of a complex woman whose tribulations and triumphs echo in our own time. This is a book about what it means to be a hero, a woman, and a person who refuses to accept the limiting roles society imposes. It also, deftly and with grace, explores the intricate and shifting boundaries of passion and love." (Connie May Fowler *author of The Problem with Murmur Lee and Before Women had Wings*)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Debra Rubino:

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