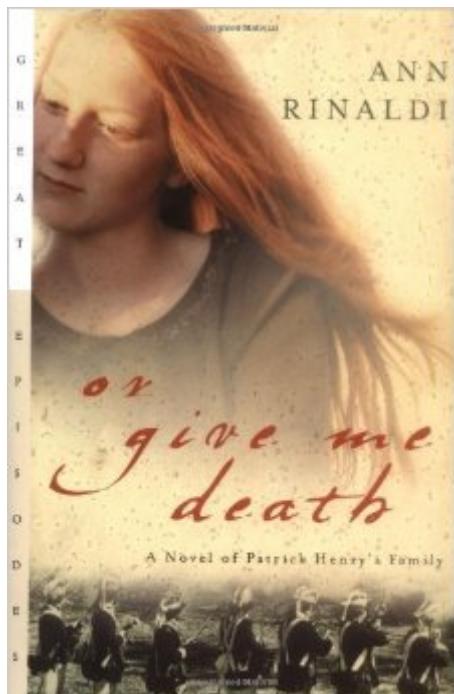


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Or Give Me Death: A Novel Of Patrick Henry's Family



Synopsis

Sarah Henry, wife of the famous statesman Patrick Henry, is losing her mind, and she's secretly being kept in the cellar because she is a danger to herself and her children. Daughter Anne has a secret, too. She knows which child will inherit Sarah's madness, and she'll pay any price to protect her siblings from this information. With insight and compassion, Ann Rinaldi explores the possibility that Patrick Henry's immortal cry of "Give me liberty, or give me death," which roused a nation to arms, was first spoken by his wife, Sarah, as she pleaded to be released from her confinement. Told from the point of view of Patrick Henry's children, *Or Give Me Death* eloquently depicts the secret life and tremendous burdens borne by one famous American.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Patrick Henry is known for his fiery cry of "Give me liberty or give me death"...but few realize the insanity of his wife or the breakdown of his family that may have set the scene for this historic remark. In "Or Give Me Death," Rinaldi decides to have Patrick Henry's daughters, Patsy and Anne, narrate the story of their mother Sarah's decline into madness. Through the voices of these girls-dutyful older sister Patsy and rebelliously clever middle daughter Anne-readers are completely drawn into the complex issues that plagued the Henry family. The hopeless life of the mentally ill in Colonial times is vividly shown, but this novel also adeptly shows something more striking. Indeed, what readers will remember most from this novel is the timeless story of what holds a family

together and what tears them apart. Patsy and Anne both fascinatingly narrate the story. Rinaldi captures Patsy's sense of duty and stability, and convincingly portrays the pressure that she felt from her father to be the "glue" that held the family together. But even as one sympathizes with Patsy's dilemma, they will also feel for Anne. Through her eyes, Rinaldi shows how perhaps the entire Henry family went mad along with their mother and wife. Tensions resulting from secrets and grudges within the family are thoughtfully shown. "Or Give Me Death" seems even more impressive when Rinaldi says in her author's note that although the entire story is not true, there are powerful "threads" of truth in it-enough truth that Rinaldi's interpretation could seem quite probable. It is refreshing to find a new angle in the life of an almost-tired historical figure.

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