

Her Time (Abridged)  
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***Chapter 0: Introduction***

Pity our poor America's founding mothers. Too often they are overlooked and dismissed far too readily by the "experts" when compared to their famous spouses. Especially maligned and wrongly slighted is Deborah Read Rogers Franklin. It does not help her case that a sizable amount of her letters disappeared inconveniently over time or that her famous husband barely mentions her in his famous *Autobiography*. Even her own birth and death years are not on her gravestone. No college or street is named after her. No money denomination bears her image. No postage stamp has been released in her honor for her important role running the Colonial postal system. The former site of the house that she helped built has no signs nearby recognizing her role. It is almost that she did not exist at all.

As a result, when measured superficially against her genius spouse, she is understandably seen as seriously lacking in temperament, character, and literacy. Deborah is mostly treated in historical articles in the harshest of terms or ignored completely. But is truly a fair indictment? A small but growing group of historians are starting to think differently after re-reviewing the facts.

HER TIME starts with the existing sparse historical record of Benjamin Franklin's spouse and provides a fictionalized version of Deborah Franklin's life. It tries to recognize fully her contributions to her family, her beloved city of Philadelphia, and what would eventually become the United States of America.

She lived a full life between raising her family, running her husband's businesses *in his absence* including the fledging Colonial Postal Service, speculating in real estate, giving advice to others when requested, and being active in Philadelphia society/social causes.

It is no mere coincidence that her husband's enterprises were so prosperous that he could retire at mid-age and focus solely on helping the American cause. Deborah Franklin was actively involved in making that happen. To ensure their ongoing success, she worked hard to keep their family operations running smoothly. Unfortunately, she never got to see her adopted land achieve its independence from the strongest power of that era. Mrs. Franklin never lived to witness the abolition of slavery. This was a cause that as a slave owner she had publicly and increasingly embraced. HER TIME also attempts to blow away some of the longstanding myths about Ms. Franklin and provides possible answers to known historical gaps. References and notes can be found at the end. She is a dynamic and charming figure that I am glad to know much better. I hope you feel the same after reading her life story. Please pass the word along about this interesting and overlooked woman.

## **Chapter 1: Prologue**

"Make it stop now dear sister", the four-year-old child wailed. The recent weeks had not been kind to her. She was missing their small but comfortable house in Birmingham, England. How she had enjoyed living in that warm and cozy dwelling off Park Street.

*It was incredible growing up in the midst of a rapidly growing city inhabited by six thousand yearning and creatively expressive souls. The area was always bustling and full of things to do or watch. There were several bridges straddling the River Rea for an energetic child to hop across. Abundant grown fields were nearby to run through. Creative inventors were always working on their next big masterpiece in undersized workplaces. Scientists were immersed in unraveling the mysteries of their areas of study including finding novel uses for steam and air. Intellectuals argued passionately and wrote vigorously about the injustices and abuses brought about by the increasingly powerful Parliament or done in the name of King William and Queen Mary.*

*And how she enjoyed the sights, sounds, and smells associated with the activities of carpentry which was the chosen profession of John, her father. It never got tiring to watch her able parent build and raise a house frame, be immersed in the smells of wood shavings, or gaze at the many interesting tools that he used. She soaked up his energy while he was intently studying how to plan out his "project", carefully choosing the right materials, and thoughtfully measuring out the various parts needing cutting. It was a process full of focus, varying rigorous activities, and in the end a completed product along with an associated satisfied owner.*

*And it was also enchanting to watch her mother prepare various salves, medicines, and ointments. Once purchased, they would remedy various aches, itches, and maladies both real and imaginary. She helped her mother gather the various herbs, flowers, and spices from their garden and the nearby woods. Then she would heat up, combine various ingredients together, or make a paste. With life expectancy at the time being only being 35, living each day with good health and to the fullest was especially important to all.*

*One day her parents decide to go to the English Colony of America. Other family members had already moved there. In their letters, they were ever sending glowing reports about the abundance and richness of this new land and the ample opportunities that could be found there. They were living a city of just three thousand people named Philadelphia -- meaning in Greek the city of brother love. It was founded by William Penn as part of the province of Pennsylvania (Penn's Woods). The name came from King Charles in his royal charter to honor William's father Sir William Penn. This was a place where freedom of thought and religion were cherished rather than seen as an afterthought.*

*But after being a victim of embezzlement and almost losing the Province, William Penn became more authoritative and less tolerant of the religious openness that he had once fostered and championed. This negative tendency was passed on to his son Thomas. The latter would be fighting for his political life while combatting the wiles of the future husband of the young girl mentioned before.*

*The day came when John and Sarah left Birmingham for the rest of their lives. They packed their important mementos, invaluable wares associated with their respective professions, and a few beloved toys for their two daughters and son. Soon all their items were placed on top of a passenger coach. Their vehicle was heading south by southeast towards the coast and the coastal city of Portsmouth. It would take just under three days to complete the journey. The ride was often bumpy and tiring. Nights were spent at 'a passenger coach inn' such as Elgar's just outside of Oxford, the Blue Rabbit in Winchester and at last, the King's Inn in Portsmouth.*

*Once arriving in Portsmouth, the children rested. Their father went to pay at the shipping office for their passage. He discovered that they would board along with others tomorrow afternoon on the Trial once the final supplies were stored below. The time arrived and they boarded the ship without incident. Everyone took their last loving look at England and went below to the lower deck. They would travel for weeks on end. If the fates cooperated, they would reach the American shore in seven weeks. Otherwise, they could be at sea for around twenty weeks.*

*The trip started well. The children were allowed on deck if they stayed in a small area. The three siblings were thrilled to see a clear sky and nothing but the sea. They were really on their way to the wondrous city of Philadelphia! Being comforted from these sights, they descended to the lower deck. The Reads were a close and loving family and would stay near each other for most of their lives.*

*But soon this novelty was overtaken by the tedium of just passing through the seemingly endless days on the ocean. This included being continuously confined under the main deck and sleeping on the floor, dealing with barely edible food, and facing constant dread about catching a fatal disease from the others while being in such close proximity.*

*Then the voyage produced one hardship followed swiftly by another. After eating the tainted food and drink, one family died. Sarah used all her healing skills to keep her own family and others well. The Reads went through periods of rough seas where each of them experienced sea sickness. Sarah once again aided her family by providing a mix of rosemary and basil to help them quickly find their sea legs. One fierce night they went through a fierce storm and the mizzenmast snapped promptly in two. The story now resumes with the the young fear-stricken sister.*

"Oh Mary, please hold me tight dear sister. We are going to die very shortly and be swallowed whole into the vastness of this angry sea. How I miss our old home so!" The four-year daughter of John and Sarah White Read was seeking reassurance from her eight-year-old sister. The younger sibling was in a state of emotional breakdown. This was in large part due to seeping of large amounts of water from the main desk, the forceful swaying of the craft from side to side, the frantic yelling of the captain and mates to the crew on what to do to keep the ship aloft, and being tossed wildly about without end. And during the whole time, the craft dramatically ascended or descended in such an angry and vengeful ocean. Then the foremast was almost no more as the power of a large wave reduced it to nearly nothing. There was an uncomfortable silence across the crew and the passengers. Everyone was thinking "Was there still hope?" Then someone started to sing a song about faith and reassurance based on Psalm 23. And others started to join in with growing confidence. They still had their Lord, captain, and crew. There was still one solid mast. They were still heading in the right direction. A landing in America was still possible albeit may take longer to reach their new home. One just needed to believe.

After this proclamation of faith was sung, things began getting a little better. Moment by moment, more stable seas came around. In the morning, the first mate reported the damage. Three crew members were washed overboard or drowned due to the high waves. The rigging (ropes) on the mainmast was damaged and was now being jury-rigged to work for the remainder. The sails had multiple holes in them. The rudder used to steer the ship was operable but hard to turn. They were still moving but conditions were far from optimal. It was estimated that of the just over 3500 miles of the voyage, they had completed 2450 of them. Even under perfect

conditions of doing eight miles a day, it would still be a long time before reaching land. Before then, they may starve or run out of water. Nonetheless, they had no choice but continue.

At first, the passengers tried to keep their spirits up. But after days on end seeing nothing but water produced a deep gloom. Some traveling on this voyage thought all was lost. One whole family apparently jumped into the sea late one night rather than to endure any more sadness. Circumstances were rapidly becoming very bleak. Although close to their new home, the tantalizing short distance and the curse of having a crippled ship made the goal too elusive. All hope was almost vanished.

Miraculously, at that moment, another ship appeared on the horizon and was coming closer at a fast clip. The captain and crew would normally hesitate to be seen not knowing if they were friend or foe. But there was no choice, one way or another, they were dead.

Soon the new ship came very close in view. It bore proudly an English flag with a combination of Saint George's (England) and St Andrew's (Scotland) crosses. The ship's name was the Mercy. The crew of the ship containing our family signaled they needed assistance. The other ship came aside and their crew boarded. When understanding the situation, the Mercy's captain offered to take everyone on board. They had gone through the same series of storms and had lost many in their crew. Fortunately, their ship was in good shape. So separately, they would likely fail. But together, they would have an experienced full crew and ample supplies. There was also plenty of room for the cargo and belongings from the "Trial" to be placed on the "Mercy." All happily agreed. And the transfer between ships proceeded without incident.

The winds were at their backs and eight weeks later, the welcoming harbor of Philadelphia came into view. A cheer arose from everyone remembering that they had not been that far away from death just a few months before.

A few days later after paying the necessary fees, the Read family rushed down the gangplank and tasted their first moments of freedom on American soil. But for some people, that trip would never be truly over. Each night, four-year-old Deborah replayed in her mind nonstop all those fearful moments of the voyage. With the sense of firm ground solidly under her, she vowed never again to talk about this voyage or ever again set out to sea. It would cost her dearly as her famous husband Benjamin Franklin would make multiple voyages spending fifteen precious years away from her company and their beloved Philadelphia.

## ***Chapter 2: Rough Awakening***

### **Modern Time**

In the Old City section of Philadelphia, a raucous and unwieldy crowd was doing a pilgrimage of sorts. As done for hundreds of years, they were paying their respects at the gravestone of one of America's greatest and unique talents, Dr. Benjamin Franklin. The long lines meant they could only stay there for a short while in front of the metal gate between 5th and Arch Streets. Besides, there are so many other historical things to see here. And here they were being all so stoic for enduring that oppressive July heat. Let us listen to some of the words and sounds of these passersby while they stare at the following gravestone:



Clink! Clink! Clink! One penny after another was being thrown artfully in homage to "Good Old Ben", landing comfortably on "his" gravestone or those of his family members close by. Occasionally there was a clanging-like sound as a badly tossed coin vibrated against the metallic gate. This never stopped during visiting hours of 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Old Burial Ground of historic Christ Church. In between the penny tossing were vocalized thoughts and conversation fragments such as the following:

Conversation #1

"A penny saved is a penny earned like dear old Ben said."

"Don't you mean Poor Richard dear?"

Conversation #2

"What does it say on the gravestone Daddy? "

"Benjamin and Deborah Franklin 1790 honey."

"When I grow up and become a bride, I will come back and throw a penny. So, like the tradition, old Ben can bless my marriage."

"I look forward to that, my little Debby."

Conversation #3

"Wow dude, these old people both died in the same year. How convenient!"

"And they had the same last names as well brother! What are the odds, eh?"

Conversation #4

"Was he really married? Who is this Deborah person?"

"I know nothing about her. She must not be that important."

Conversation #5

"Deborah Franklin. Heard old Ben describe her as being as ugly as a beer mug."

"Heard their marriage turned cold near the end and he stopped loving her. If he ever did at all."

Conversation #6

"There lies that sly old dog, Ben 'the Ladies Man' Franklin. Never stopped chasing women of all sorts even after his marriage. It is said that he liked both the mothers and the daughters. Bedding them left and right. Apparently, dear old Mrs. Franklin didn't know or didn't care."

Conversation #7

"Mother, who is Deborah Franklin?"

"Well she lived in Philadelphia her whole life. I don't think she ever left the city. Not even once. Not only that, dear daughter, but she never went with her husband to England."

"Do you think she was scared she would make a bad impression on English society and would embarrass her husband if she opened her mouth even once?"

"Yes, exactly."

#### Conversation #8

"Why did he marry her? I heard that it was out of pity because she had some questionable circumstances."

"They were not married at all legally. Just a common-law marriage and nothing more than that."

#### Conversation #9

"She doesn't deserve to share the same grave as her esteemed husband."

"Did you ever read her so-called letters? She could not even write or spell. It would be a disservice to her fine husband to call her anything close to literate."

#### Conversation #10

"So, this is where that slave owner and hypocrite Ben Franklin lies. The hideous beast thought a woman's education was only good enough to make her a better wife. Couldn't even control his sexual urges and had a son out of wedlock. (And some of the subsequent generations of Franklins continued the sorry tradition of siring illegitimate children.) Then the skunk imposes on the kindness of his newly married wife Deborah to raise his ignoble offspring. So just like the lowness of the man. And he is a control freak to boot with his family. Later, he abandons his son William just like that due to political differences. Or so they say. But some historians think that it was because his son did not publicly endorse Dr. Franklin after the latter was embarrassed during a hearing in London in 1774 and then being dismissed from his Postmaster post. 'Evil Ben' even lets William rot in the foulest of jails without any remorse. Eight months of solitary confinement under the harshest conditions imaginable. During that time, William's beloved wife Elizabeth dies of heartache after pleading fruitlessly for Ben's assistance. Her famous father-in-law sends her money from time to time but does nothing to expedite William's release feigning helplessness. It is too bad that the senior Franklin did not like his wonderful daughter-in-law. His poor son was left with next to nothing after imprisonment. There was never any attempt at reconciliation. And to top it all off, the 'ethical' father disinherits William in his will. He leaves him barren land in Nova Scotia. Benjamin Franklin is the *real* bastard. Not his offspring."

"Also, he was never good at long-term relationships and raising his own kids. Instead he was a good surrogate father to *other people's children*. Missed his own daughter's growing up and marriage. Purposely avoided William's wedding. Cared more about the cost and fanciness of his daughter's wedding than attending. Imagine that! He did not even know that his long-suffering wife was dying until after the fact. Talk about being cold and distant! At least he was better to his male grandchildren."

"Double stinking bastard. Let us leave and see the Elizabeth Griscom Ross house."

"Yes, with another set of myths to support the origin of this country. Heck! Many say that Betsy Ross did not even live there. Or that the events in the Colonial flag design story ever happened. It is the hard, unrecognized labor of women that built this country. Let us go and see what an oppressed household looks like. It will be yet another tiny brick house to look at. Oh, I will start crying seeing how a tyrannical economic and social system caged our poor sister of sweat. Ugh! I am reading about her online. She was married three times. I can't imagine being tied down to three different ungrateful men."

### Conversation #11

"That Ben Franklin had one dark and twisted side."

"You mean regularly attending the Hellfire Club in England with its debauchery and orgies? And rumored satanic rituals?"

"No, I meant him leaving all those bones found at a house that he stayed in London. Twelve hundred of them in fact. Was the guy killing people at night and then never caught? Or course they say that a surgeon named William Hewson lived there. And that he was *allegedly* studying anatomy. But we know better."

"Indeed, we do. Franklin is no innocent. Must have helped with the grave digging. Or put the bodies there himself."

"You still trying to get back at me for not going to the Mütter museum with those disturbing anatomical nightmares, is it? Not happening today. Time for lunch."

### Conversation #12

"Are you crying Henry? This must be the thousandth time that you have visited here."

"I come to be inspired. He did so much for Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the United States, and even the world. His *Autobiography* and other writings are full of wisdom and insight. His incredible inventions and discoveries that he left to the world freely without any restrictions. The organizations he founded including the University of Pennsylvania. He was our best Postmaster General, editor of the Declaration of Independence, and attendee at the Constitution Convention. And don't forget, a signer of the Treaty of Paris. Oh, I could go on and on."

"I wonder if this is what Mrs. Franklin felt like. Let's go home, genius."

Clink

Clink

Clink

It almost never stopped. Either the pennies were falling or the tourists pausing in reverence and then leaving. Someone was watching this parade of activity from inside the Burial Ground. This procession of humanity was making her upset and put her in a sobbing state. This spirit had been there caressing the very nearby gravestones of her children while in tears. How cruel that these thoughtless beings do not give any attention to her children from her beloved spouse "Pappy" Ben Franklin.



FRANCIS F. Son of  
Benjamin and Deborah Franklin  
Deceased Novr 21<sup>st</sup> 1736  
Aged 4 years 1 month and 4 days  
The delight of all that knew him

RICHARD }  
And } BACHE  
SARAH }  
1811

Awakened after an uneasy slumber of well over two hundred years, the spirit of Debby Franklin was infuriated to hear all the mean spirited and untrue things being said about her and her husband. This is supposed to be a more enlightened age, perhaps even a step away from utopia. How could these modern people be so misinformed? She needed some time to learn more about this society and their misconceptions of her period. Then she could find a way to bring the truth to light. Somehow.

### ***Chapter 3: A Channeler's Unhappy Day***

It was yet another replay of the same old weekday ritual in the cluttered and tiny bedroom. The morning alarm would start. But its untimely arrival was ignored. No one would rise in time to make its horrendous din cease. As a result, the electronic alarm's sound kept raising in pitch and intensity. In time, the WHOLE ROOM was shaking from the loud vibrations it emitted! Long after these deafening moments had reached its peak, the room's sole occupant involuntarily arose from her deep and comforting rest. Then they lunged fully forward to shut off the alarm. The effort was a success. Silence reigned once again.

And just like an uninvited guest, that is how this particular Wednesday made its presence known to thirty-year-old Silver Littleton. Of course, this was not her true birth name. That was kept hidden from an unsuspecting world. Because if the various pained creditors and past clients knew that the former Tracey Marie Holstrum was in town, she would be hauled immediately before a judge. And sentenced for a long while due to all her youthful bad choices. If only she could take them back and just say how sorry she was. But that does not happen often in the real life.

In reality, so many bad things ALWAYS happened on Wednesdays. The betrayal of Jesus by Judas, dangerous and powerful hurricanes, serial shootings, and the deaths of Robert Frost and Charles Darwin. And that is only the highlights.

But for Silver Littleton, Wednesdays were especially never a good day. Because that meant THEY would soon be here. And that meant being left threatening notes written in large dark capital letters followed by the incessant thunderous pounding of her already well dented front door. And if access was provided by her reluctantly after this din, then she would be confronted with fiery looking faces accompanied by the most unsettling series of emotional tirades.

Silver was not always a target of unscrupulous debt collectors and unforgiving monolithic financial intuitions. While still quite young, her life had taken a mysterious turn deep into the paranormal. One day, she realized that she had received the gift to see and converse with the dearly departed. It began when walking home from school, a recently deceased mother came to her. It startled her initially. Heck, she was quivering at full strength. But, she could see the spirit was afflicted and not frightful. So, Silver adjusted to the situation and spoke to the tormented essence. The dead woman asked to possess her. She agreed with great trepidation. The unified being soon convinced their parents to drive them to the location in a park indicated. Once there, a young girl was found, damp, and quite understandably a little shaken. Thrilled to see this, the spirit thanked her for saving her daughter and left Silver's body. And from there, her career took off. Many of the dearly departed souls in the vicinity never left her alone. And the living was willing to partake of her services for a generous fee as well. Everything was good and manageable.

But situations can change rapidly and often for the worst. The phenomena of digital shopping arose and with it, the rapid proliferation of online channelers and mediums. Customers were thrilled and flocked dearly to use these "exclusive" services. And this could be done around the clock as well! No longer was there a need to venture out of the comfort of their homes to communicate with long-gone loved ones. All one needed was a camera, a headset with a working microphone, a good network connection, and the comfort of a favorite chair in your home. People could record and play back the session. And all this with volume discounts. It was a grand success.

Silver resisted this trend. She liked the intimacy of face to face sessions rather than relying on the fickleness of digital networks. As a result, she saw her onsite visits decline, a rise of overdue bills, and an increase of "appointments" by aggressive bill collectors. And with this transition, a strong sense of lack became her constant friend.

Maybe it was that time once again -- to head out for somewhere else. Perhaps beginning in another city could yield better results. Silver always wanted to visit Omaha. Which alias would she use. Ah, something ordinary, Lisa Lee, confidant of the dead. Had a nice ring to it.

She looked at her calendar. One hour each for the two wealthy sisters that always wanted the non-existent senior citizen discount. It was not much, but that would hold her for a few days. They came and left quickly. And Silver was one hundred and fifty dollars richer.

Then it was that special time. She retreated in the coziness of preparing and eating lunch. It was her favorite which always cheered her up. That meant an overstuffed Italian salami, lettuce, and tomato sandwich. The salami was especially delicious, fresh, spicy, and sliced thin. It was just the way she liked it. "Ah, this was paradise", she thought while sinking her teeth into this gastronomic combination.

Just then, this short moment of calm and bliss was violently disturbed. Against her will, an angry and willful spirit took control of her shapely female frame. It found a nearby pen and wrote the following words in bold capital letters:

**GET ME CALEB G. TEMPLE. NOW!!! DEB FRANKLIN WISHES TO TALK!!!**

When Silver came to, she read these words and recalled feeling the ire of this hostile spirit. She needed to research a little before contacting this Caleb person. She knew nothing about him. Also, who was this Deb Franklin anyway?

That could all wait until finishing her afternoon repast. Ah! The salami sandwich is so good!

#### ***Chapter 4: Deb Franklin Makes her Presence Known***

But what is a life anyway? That brief time between birth and death? The sum of all our actions? Those we that we gave love to or loved us? The rare occasions we forgave ourselves and others? The internal and external acts of hatred or anger, however briefly, that we enacted? Or perhaps it is all or none of these?

From the start, each of us attempts to navigate our way through the ever-changing and always dramatic stream of moments that we call our existence. This involves making a series of choices with some decisions being more important than others. For many, the reactive nature of the circumstances drives their behavior. Just trying to live, or get by, or making it to the next pay period.

But there are others that live very differently. They have a unifying life principle that gives them purpose and increases their self-esteem. For one small and slightly disoriented minority, this is an over-identification with a famous ancestor. They feel that their lives are so insignificant and mundane. To counter this, they need to resort digging into the past to learn about any famous relation. Even those that interacted ever so briefly with the famous such as a hair dresser, neighbor, or distant cousin is acceptable and exciting to their minds. If finding only the faintest of connections, these creatures feel still their lives enriched and with a higher status.

Solidly placed in this category is a Mr. Caleb G. Temple who coincidentally lives not that far away from the previously introduced character and channeler, Ms. Silver Littleton. Somewhere early in his childhood, his mother told him that he was the most distant of relatives of a Mr. Benjamin Franklin. Knowing about this unlikeliest of all ancestral connections became his downfall and altered his personality forever. He developed a deep obsession with this very famous American from the past. He started to dress and talk like dear old Ben. Classmates and teachers were amused at first. But soon quietly steered away from the obviously afflicted young man blossoming into an outright weirdo.

As a result, Caleb retreated from the world into intensely researching Dr. Franklin's past and having imaginary conversations with him. Somehow, he made it to the finish line and graduated high school. Perhaps it was because his teachers got tired enduring one of his far too lengthy book reports on dear old Benjamin.

Once out of school, he needed to make a living. So, he started selling unusual "Franklin-mania" items. Like a copy of the *Autobiography* written backwards. Or a video discourse where he dressed as Ben Franklin and covered some juicy topic in the news of that day.

Inexplicably, he filled a "needs void" by doing this. He made hundreds of millions and was able to buy a large house filled with actual Franklin artifacts. His former classmates and teachers were astounded by his incredible good fortune. He was dumb and crazy old Caleb no longer.

Like Franklin, he was able to be financially successful and retire early. But rather than enjoying his life, he used his leisure time instead to embrace his obsession further. He became a noted amateur historian on Ben Franklin and was often consulted by others on related subjects. Caleb's ego grew after every success and encounter. He began increasingly to daydream about his distant relative.

Then one day the dam of illusions broke wide open. He received an electronic letter from a name that he did not recognize -- a Ms. Silver Littleton. The message body was short and to the point:

DEB WANTS TO TALK

Caleb was a little puzzled and taken aback. Did Deb mean Deborah Read Rogers Franklin? But wasn't she long dead? How could this be? Or could it be another Deb? After thinking a little more, the possibilities were getting him excited. This could be an incredible opportunity. Intrigued, he wrote back to learn more about this unusual offer. The notes went back and forth until the anticipated meeting took place.

Several weeks later

At last, the great day of this incredible meeting had arrived.

Silver had yet again tripped out of bed. She saw this strange guy Caleb G. Temple as just another customer. Then when the show was done, just maybe this dear old Debby Franklin might leave her in a long-needed peace.

Caleb, the self-perceived hero, rose in his stately house two hours before his already early usual time. Oh, how his body was tingling all over with anticipation of this great moment. To be actually meeting Deborah Franklin in the flesh so to speak. He really did not know that much about her from his nearly exhaustive research other than she was Ben Franklin's wife of so many years. But oh, the saucy stories she can tell! And the unresolved mysteries that she can clear! His face emanated nothing other than pure, innocent joy.

Arriving forty-five minutes early, he knocked heavily and repeatedly on her door. An annoyed and a clearly not yet caffeinated Ms. Silver opened it with a string of well-chosen curse words on the tip of her biting tongue springing forth. Already this was not going well. And she wanted badly to finish that steamy dream.

After the initial volley, she held herself back, Silver just stared at him. It was far too early for this. The guy looked exactly like a young Ben Franklin. Except skinnier. And just a very tiny bit more handsome.

Once the door was open, Caleb was taken aback. She was around during his age and dressed sharply. She was also quick with the words and caustic with her replies. This person appeared very unhappy to see him. He was unsure why this was the case. While he was taking in her stinging barrages, he noticed as a bonus, she had an uncommon beauty that he was drawn immediately to.

But there was something else about her that was familiar. Caleb pored over his past in those few seconds and recalled something. Curiosity overwhelmed him. She had to be the same person. It was time to confirm. He then asked, "Excuse me, Ms. Silver, did you go to Rudolf Chaplin Jr. High School? "

Now that question out of Caleb's mouth was about the last thing that she expected. Was this a pickup line? Where was he going with this?

"Yes, I did for four years."

Caleb was smiling and Silver was not liking this foray into bizarro-land. What was he getting at? Had they met before? She started to reluctantly look back in her memory of that unfavorable period.

"Oh, you did? I see. What four years did you attend?"

And so, I told him. He nodded.

"It is just as I thought, we attended exactly at the same time. Then you might remember a boy that looked a little like and talked about nothing other than Ben Franklin, our greatest American ever, sobbing outside of gym class? You just spent a little time talking to him with great kindness. And for those moments of compassion, I thank you for your soothing words and reassuring actions."

Silver thought that Caleb's approach was sounding a little strange. He was far too passionate about Ben Franklin. Maybe the dorky guy was a little lonely? With a few wardrobe and appearance changes, he might not be that bad looking. This greatly surprised her to learn they had in a sense grown up together and had shared the same space once before.

Finally, she remembered who he was -- the picked-on kid with that mere hint of handsomeness. Others did not like him because he was dressed like his distant ancestor. It was during a time that she had not built up her defenses and the spirits were often bothering her asking for help during the school day. She had no school friends at that time, because Silver did not want them to be harmed or bothered by the citizens of the afterlife as well. As a result, her strangely distant manner accompanied by an angry but hurt look ensured a protective distance from other students. This whole apparition thing was something for her alone to endure in silence. She hid in a well-placed corner of the school and library and kept always to herself.

With some effort, she remembered in full the day in question that he mentioned. It had been a particularly hard one for her. Someone had purposely tripped her while walking through the hallway. When Silver looked up from her agony while on the ground, she could see nothing but faces mocking her with their words and looks. She needed to retreat. But where? What was nearby? Ah yes, the gym. There were always teachers and a crowd in the area at that time, Tracey Marie Holstrum (the young Silver) headed there and saw what must have been youthful Caleb. Seeing someone in worse straits than herself, Silver felt some compassion for him. She forgot about herself and her tormentors that were likely soon to appear. Her sole focus was calming a very anguished Caleb who had his own set of bullies to deal with. He quieted down and smiled at her in gratitude. Silver felt fulfilled herself and they both went on with their lives, never to interact so visibly ever again, until now.

Silver was experiencing feelings that had not arisen in some time. It was a type of yearning to know Mr. Caleb G. Temple a little better. He was vastly different than any of her clients or the people that she daily interacted with. But in a very good way. She liked how he called her with reverence Ms. Silver and that he was polite and considerate. There has been no one like that in her life for some time. Because of her past unfortunate financial dealings, she was very careful letting anyone get especially close to her, especially romantically. But with Caleb, she felt safe and valued. Still, she had to be very careful in dealing with him and keep her heart locked safely away.

She was surprised that this man was going to pay her for this session. "It is only right. I am taking advantage of your time and gifts. You need some sort of compensation for that." Maybe he would save her from complete financial ruin. In return, Silver would make sure that he would get his money's worth in regards to Deb Franklin.

They both entered the "soul sessions room." Silver sat down in her customary place at the round table and Caleb next to her. And without a moment's notice, Ms. Silver Littleton was taken over and possessed by a spirit claiming to be Deborah Franklin. And this entity from the past was *far* from happy. Her tone was biting and mocking. As if she had been badly emotionally hurt in her past.

"Well after days of idly waiting, you *finally* arrive in my presence, Master Caleb G. Temple. And here I thought you were just avoiding my mere presence. But you came around eventually. And there is nothing shameless about you, is there? Immediately, you hit on this troubled vessel named Silver Littleton. Reminds me on how my dear husband would flirt by pen and through conversation with the various women of our time. Well, maybe it will work out well with you. Just to let you know, she is thinking perhaps a little romantically about you. Maybe in time, I will get another little descendant along the way. No matter. Let us get the matter at hand."

"I looked your particulars up. Nothing impressive about you at all. Here stands before me the great creator of 'Franklin-mania'. I guess people of this time are so starved to be nestled next to greatness. Or so-called greatness. I will say this for you. You did quite a fine job exploiting my husband. The hilarious bit is that you are barely related to him. I had books more related to him than you are."

"And what about this supposed relationship? Why, you come from the Franklin bloodline but not of my dear Sallie. You probably call her by formal name of Sarah."

"Instead, you are descended though the most unreliable and lowest of sons, that personal traitor William. Tragically, that means you are related to me as well. Ah, I see from your look that I have revealed one of your blessed Dr. Franklin's well-kept secrets. You probably thought that he was the lowly offspring of some strumpet as my husband called his treasured women for nightly hire, an oyster woman, the wife of his friend, or even one of our maids. Or that things happened while boarding with the family of mathematician and glazier (colonial glass maker) Thomas Godfrey. I have heard all the usual slanders and read much of the *'fine scholarship'* on this topic. Such as 'William is a reminder of that one night my husband spent with his intended bride, a Godfrey relative.' "These are all fictions that fall apart when held up to the light of the day."

"Welcome Master Temple to another self-made fiction from my dear late husband. He created so many tales about himself and spun them so well, that they have held up until present day. I am amazed that you and so many others still fall for them. In addition, there are scores upon scores of stories and untruths about him. As a result, people thought he had so many more illegitimate offspring than he actually had. Like that supposed daughter of his that married John Foxcroft. All because he wrote overly affectionate letters that were misinterpreted as a deep relationship by past biographers. Even after all these years, this shows up as supposed fact on your computer networks. Incredible how fact-starved this world has become. And that is why I am here today. Before seeking a return to some blessed rest, I am here to tell the *true story* of Dr. Benjamin Franklin and my *very important* part in it. Then, let us see if you judge your esteemed ancestor the same way after that. Along the way, you may ask questions. Or perhaps I will prod you to ask them if they are not forthcoming fast enough."

"Agreed Mrs. Franklin. Let us start with a simple query -- Why me, Deborah? There are plenty of noted scholars both deceased and alive that may be a much more appropriate and knowledgeable audience."

"Call me Debby if you please. I have never been one for pretense. Most historians are tainted by their harsh and incorrect interpretation of the past. They are also strangers. You are my

living relative as well as being fairly knowledgeable about my spouse as most of the world sees him. You are passionate and appear to be thoughtful and fair in your online writings. All I ask is that you listen to my life story. Then, if you feel it is worth telling, then get it published. Do you agree? Good, I see from the nod of your head that you do."

What follows in the rest of the book is her narrative from the "interview", leaving all the superfluous parts for the most part. This includes Debby's constant and rough scolding of Caleb. Silver gripping about Deb's eagerness to use her body without her permission, and Caleb's periodic whining on how his beloved ancestor's reputation was being tarnished. Despite all the verbal combat, they got along fine enough and completed a thorough review of her life. As well as his.

### ***Chapter 5: Early Years & Sea Voyage (1705-1711)***

Another morning had made its way into the world and Caleb yet again arrived far too early for his appointment with history. This time, Silver is ready for him and opened the door with the widest of smiles. This was such a contrast from the day before. They sit down in the kitchen and share a cup of fresh coffee. Afterwards, Caleb makes the promised payment and Silver is thrilled. Starting later today, she can begin paying off some of those long delinquent bills. After drinking coffee and having small talk, they enter the room for the "soul session". Silver smiles and says, "I feel closer to the spirits here." And immediately, a known and impatient soul 'pounces' on her and takes possession. Deb is clearly in a bad mood.

"Well, I am glad you two are getting along so swimmingly. Mr. 'Franklin-mania' along with this earthly vessel I am temporarily inhabiting. Meantime, I am just sitting around, idling my precious time away waiting for you eventually to show up. Well, when I am about ready to quit waiting, you appear as if nothing has happened. That would vex the most even-tempered of spirits. So, my most distant of descendants, let us commence reviewing the story of my times and life."

"There are so many ways that this tale could begin. It could be a dramatic episode or a comparison of my time versus yours, or just the facts. Or maybe a little of all three."

"So, from what I have seen, the so-called historians of this age have found out next to nothing about my origins. Isn't it amusing that these same *supposed experts* will leave no historical stone unturned to find all that they can on my glorious husband? Coincidence or selective laziness? You be the judge!"

"Let me tell you the little that they say typically about me:

*Name: Deborah Read Rogers Franklin:*

*Parents: John Read Sr. and Sarah Read (White)*

*Siblings: 2-7. Believed to be the second oldest. Had an older sister Mary, a younger one Frances, and a younger brother John Jr.*

*Birth: 1704-1708. Some say as late as 1710. 1705, 1707, or 1708 are most commonly mentioned. Her husband was born in 1706.*

*Birth City: Birmingham England or Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.*

*Education: Very Little. Reading with some writing skills.*

*How she met my husband: While he is carrying puffy rolls under each arm in downtown Philadelphia after running away from Boston."*

"Not much to go on, is it? Who wants to read anything about someone where so little is known?"

"So, let me tell you what I believe to be true or was told by my parents or sister."

"I was born around the same time as my husband in 1707. I was younger by just a year or less. I grew up in Birmingham England. During my childhood, I learned some powerful life lessons. These include:"

"1) Place your faith in the Lord and his servants. Unlike my dear husband, I was raised in the Anglican or what you call the Episcopal church today. Some think that I was raised as a Quaker but that is not the case. The Book of Common Prayer, The King James Bible, books by William Law, and other religious works became my companions throughout the years."

"2) Take care of your family and friends. Through lodging, financial assistance, great affection, and moral support."

"3) Love your husband, children, and relatives. And never stop doing this."

"4) Provide charity to the stranger in need."

"5) Be a helpmate to your husband with his business(es) and generate some income from your own financial enterprises. Industry not sloth will bring soon great wealth. Do not spend time worshipping at the altar of idleness."

"We were a warm and loving family. I lived near or stayed in contact with my parents and siblings throughout my life. I spent a lot of time with my younger sister Frances. Dear Franny, she was kind and we would always be close. So much so, that she moved next to me in Philadelphia and her children played with mine. We both had to bury our dearest young loved ones. She was a wonderful companion for the brief time that she lived. When she died, I took on the task of raising her daughter Deborah Croker as my own. We too would stay close. My niece would pass away a few months after my own demise."

"My parents and older sister taught me reading so I could read the holy works. Women were not to spend time learning how to write. But I learned the basics. My real education was helping my father with his carpentry and my mother with her medical remedy businesses. In time, I studied how to keep track of the paper and on very rare occasions, coin money that these occupations brought in. This training by my family continued and expanded after moving to America. From the woman that brought me safely into the world, I saw how she made herself indispensable to her husband and transformed their marriage into a true partnership. I wanted to have the same thing when the time came for my wedded bliss. She worked hard at all that she did including raising us. And for that I am grateful."

"Sarah's occupation was not typical for that time. Instead, women were supposed to have their whole life centered in the domestic arena. This meant marrying young to a suitable and financially capable husband. Then focus on bearing, raising, and too often burying their children. Duties also included running the household, being a good wife whatever that meant to your spouse, serving as hostess to your husband's guests, and turning a blind eye to your husband's occasional indiscretions."

"The business, political and intellectual spheres were mostly hands off for the female sex. As financial circumstances dictated, women could help their husbands. But making money and serving their customers was never supposed to be a key focus. I am proud that my mother was an exception to this."

"Birmingham was a city undergoing rapid growth due the various factories there. It would blossom into one of the largest cities in England. Hearing about wondrous opportunities in North America, my parents wanted to leave for America. So, we emigrated and had a disastrous journey along the way. Since then, I have a dreadful fear of the sea affirmed by all the awful stories that I kept hearing around the wharf area of Philadelphia. "



"Once in Philadelphia, we would settle on Market Street. It would be the same location where I would meet and fall in love with my husband. But we have some ways in the story to go before that happens."

"I was surprised to read that you could go across the ocean in hours if flying or in days by ocean liner. Think about it! A trip of such a short duration would have been more amenable to me. I might have decided to visit my husband at least once. But maybe not. Because the sounds and streets of Philadelphia were such a part of me, they would be difficult to part even for a brief time."

### ***Chapter 6: Deborah Before Ben (1712-1723)***

They took a break since Silver was at her physical limits containing even for that short a time such a dynamic personality. They had a leisurely lunch at a restaurant of her choosing where Caleb and Silver talked about their high school memories and what happened in their lives afterwards. Later they returned to the Silver's house. When Deb "returned", she started with an unusual statement:

"When I awoke some days back, I took the time to catch up on what had taken place in this land since my passing. It was gratifying to see the country that we all fought so hard for was still intact and now covered with people from one ocean to another. Nothing like this I could ever imagine."

"The technology that you have now is incredible and my husband would have been delighted for days on end exploring all of its intricacies. How he became so animated when seeing a new invention or scientific discovery!"

"He would have likely been disappointed that humankind still struggles daily to make progress on equality and identity issues. In addition, it is heart wrenching to read the very deep strains of north versus south, young versus old, and rural versus urban that wrack this fair land. I also note with regret that the same level of political divisiveness and shrillness exists today just as it did in early America. In time, you may learn that the bickering needs to stop. A look at any map reveals that there is plenty of room for all in this great land that you share."

Then she resumed telling her story:

"Between the periodic downturns, my family mostly prospered in this new Colony of America. My father bought two lots between the time that I was four and nine. Eventually, he built a small house on one of them which was sixteen and a half feet by eighteen feet where we lived. A room with an outside kitchen was also included. A house was built also on a second lot. These were tiny even by most of your modern standards."

"My whole world largely took place within these cramped quarters. Each day my parents, siblings, a female slave and myself lived, slept, and dined there. It was not as welcoming and comfortable a place as our little cottage in Birmingham. But in time, I regarded it as home."

"I mentioned previously how my days were occupied between education, church, and helping my parents, particularly my mother in their trade. In time, my brother John Jr. would take on the occupation of carpenter like his father and namesake. Neither Frances or myself had the knack to be in the healing and medicine business like our mother. But I liked the various activities of making medicines of all kinds, the smells of the various herbs, and watching how deftly my mother handled meeting her customer's needs all with a cheerful face. She was so busy and successful, that Sarah my mother needed to rely more on her daughters to be responsible for key duties. So, Franny became the warm face that Sarah's customers often saw when picking up their purchases. And I would write down and track in the account book the various funds brought

in. This was mostly either paper money, a few coins here and there, and barter for needed goods and wares. Rarely did my mother allow credit transactions."

"In time, money became tight and my father had to mortgage both properties. He then passed away soon afterwards. Later, these lots would become part of what is today called Franklin Court. I would live in this same compact area for most of my life with my brother, sister, daughter, a husband that was often away, and the house slaves. I see that my unwilling relation Caleb expressing disapproval on my keeping slaves. I understand and he is correct with his viewpoint. How my views on slavery changed over the years will be discussed later."

"In my time, education was just as much a parental responsibility as it was the state's. Note that William Penn, the founder of this city and state was a strong proponent of education but his government did not enforce compulsory attendance. So, my parents took great pains to teach all their children how to read and do some writing before entering school. I entered the same uncomfortably small classroom for six years for a few hours each day. This was not a time of great personal joy because I had to sit in on uncomfortable chairs in front of well-worn desks. this was accompanied by instructors that were strict and impatient. The boys were expected to have a longer school day to learn more about writing, mathematics, and other subjects. Writing was viewed as a skill only for business not something needed every day by young girls. This was great tragedy for a generation of Colonial women on not having opportunities to learn how to write well."

"But things changed mostly for better during the last three years of my educational life. Different groups like the Quakers strongly supported education for all. So, with my parents' support, I went to a Quaker school during this time. In addition to enhancing my reading and number skills, I was learning a little history, and reading some literary classics. At this time, I enjoyed schooling greatly and learned things rapidly. Best of all, I made my first real and lifelong friend, Deborah Norris. Her parents were wealthy and living in a mansion called Fair Hill. They were good friends with the Penn family. However, Deborah never threw her affluence in anyone's face. Her brother Isaac Jr. was close to my husband and like him, would retire early to focus on political and public service. I was well acquainted with her three other sisters as well. I attended the marriages of two of them to well-off husbands. But I was nearest to Elizabeth and Deborah, both remained single throughout their life. Elizabeth grew quite wealthy and was an early advocate of achieving gender equality and countering the patriarchal structure of Colonial America. She used her role as a spinster as a symbol in this fight. Although their father was a slave owner and trader, she had freed all her slaves by the end of her life. I respected and understood what she was trying to do on the issue of equality.

Through Deborah and Elizabeth, I met a lot of other Quaker women that became in time good friends. One of these was Susannah Wright. She never married and lived to the ripe old age of eighty-eight. Her family was also close to Ben as well. He would write to her on occasion, sharing some recent scientific studies and other matters. She also wrote poetry such as on Deborah's sister Elizabeth and like Elizabeth, fought in her own way for women's rights.

But unlike Elizabeth and Susannah, I was not a spinster but married twice over. And I was very contented in my second marriage to Mr. Benjamin Franklin, thank you very much. We were all part of a growing and powerful network of women that ran various businesses, took part in projects for the public good, and relied on each other in the Greater Philadelphia area. Many of my sex in Colonial America *were far from being docile or weak*. And for my part, I *certainly* did not hold back speaking my mind when the occasion called for it. And for the most part, my husband approved and relied on this."

"But let us get back to Deborah Norris. How I loved her friendship which deepened throughout our lives. When we were girls, we played and spent our leisure time together. As we got older, we shared stories about our families and known acquaintances in our small world of Philadelphia. We talked for hours on our hopes, dreams, disappointments, deepest secrets, and current problems. She was a dear person and like a very close older sister to me."

"I often attended Quaker worship meetings with her. It was so different than those at Christ Church because services are almost completely in silence. That was the time that I felt closest to God. At the end. I hear the announcements of activities in the area both social and political. Some of these events I would attend."

"I wish that I could say the same thing for Ben and Quaker meetings. Here is what he said on his first day in Philadelphia after the supposed 'eating puffy rolls and meeting his future wife (that's me)' encounter:

*"Thus refreshed, I walked again up the street, which by this time had many clean-dressed people in it, who were all walking the same way. I joined them, and thereby was led into the great meeting-house of the Quakers near the market. I sat down among them, and, after looking round awhile and hearing nothing said, being very drowsy thro' labor and want of rest the preceding night, I fell fast asleep, and continued so till the meeting broke up, when one was kind enough to rouse me. This was, therefore, the first house I was in, or slept in, in Philadelphia."*

"Some years later, Deborah Norris passed away in May 17th 1767. It took all the strength that I could muster to attend my darling Debby's funeral. I cried nonstop for days thereafter. Shortly afterwards, I paid my condolences at the previously mentioned Elizabeth. She said, 'In some ways you were much closer to my sister' and how my dearest friend adored me. It was nice to hear that. But I knew that in some small way already."

"Back to my childhood and school days, good things sometimes come to a screeching halt. As was often the case in those days, the schoolmaster left heading out west. I never heard what became of him and was unable to find out more in your online databases. The school then closed for slightly over a year. And my dear friend had private tutoring instead. But that was the end of schooling for me. My mother was increasingly relying on my help to run things."

"My parents attended Christ Church which was an Anglican (later Episcopal after the Revolution) church. Its foundation was initiated by the inclusion of a clause in William Penn's charter for Pennsylvania. This allowed sending a preacher to form such a church if there was sufficient interest of twenty beings. Note that this was done to lessen the impact of Penn's Quakers in Pennsylvania. The church would be an anchor and the longest relationship in my life. I enjoyed thoroughly their services. Weddings, baptisms, and funerals for family members including myself were all held there. As said earlier, I am also lying next to my husband in their Burial Ground. Going there to church reminded me a little of the England that I was quickly forgetting. I would see the current ruler's emblem on the royal governor's pew when entering the church and feel at home. On special occasions, the belfry's sole occupant would joyously peal. Shortly after my two marriages, a new church building would be constructed."

It was a very full and active life and I loved in my spare time walking through the streets of Philadelphia hearing all the different languages being spoken and styles of clothing. English, French, Scottish, Welsh, German, Portuguese, Dutch, a few Native American tongues, and far more. It was very much a living and breathing city of five thousand healthy souls. This was close as I ever came to travel and seeking adventure. I explored the entire bustling city as time allowed with my friend Deborah Norris or sister Franny."

"I had time to do this because due to hard work, my father found a steady stream of business for his woodworking skills. However, there was always something needing to pay. So, he would take in one or two lodgers that would share meals with the family. In time, one of these would be the young, tall, incredibly handsome Ben Franklin. My dear runaway."

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### ***About the Author***

Hallett German is a fiction and technical subject author on various aspects of IT and business. His works of fiction cross multiple genres including children, young adult, dysfunctional corporate mysteries/fantasies, historical fiction, and steampunk. His books offer a unique and original ride into other worlds and lives. He is the author of series (Olivia Plymouth Amazi, Chronicles, In Small Doses, and Corporate Intent) and single books (Combustible Networks, Ghosts vs. Robots, Saving Eddie, Killing Thoreau, Missed Landing, and Command and Control).

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